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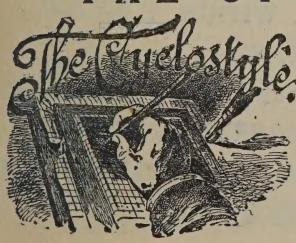

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London
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1887

CYNIC FORTUNE.

I.

'GOOD-NIGHT; good-bye; bon voyage!'

'Good-bye; and thank you a thousand times! How many fellows are there in the world, Kenyon, who would travel a thousand miles, or thereabouts, to give an old chum the pleasure of dining with him?'

'I came to get the pleasure—not to give it.'

'Well, it's like you, either way. The best-hearted fellow in the world! Good-bye!'

The farewells were spoken in the vestibule of the Hôtel des Postes, and the speakers were English: the one broad-shouldered, brown-bearded, bright-eyed, and florid of complexion; the other bent, pale, and meagre.

The hall porter, standing with an air of absolute unconsciousness of anybody's presence, in readiness to open the door, threw back the portal as the florid man shook his friend by the hand for the last time, and let in a gust of biting air and a cloud of melting snowflakes.

'What a night!' said the host. 'You are not going to walk, Kenyon?'

'There is no such thing as a fiacre abroad on such a night at such an hour as this,' replied the other; 'but I know my way. Good-night; good-bye!'

The door closed behind the stalwart, well-clad figure, and Robert Kenyon, bending his head to the storm, rammed his hands into the pockets of his overcoat, and strode along with a mind full of pleasant fancies. He was Paris bred, and knew his way well enough; but, though Paris bred, this was his first visit to the old city for more than twenty years, and his mind, not unnaturally, was busy with memories of his student days.

He hummed laughingly, as he went along, a couplet of Barbier, which he set to an improvised tune of his own:

> 'Le garçon jouflu, bien frais et dans son gloire
> Chantant, à plein gosier, les belles après-boire.'

'And, ah! the jolly days,' said he—'the merry, merry days, when we were young!'

Suddenly stopping short in his walk, and speaking aloud, with the oddest and abruptest emphasis, he said, 'Confound the fellow! what right has he to intrude his ugly image on one's mind?' and so walked on again.

The snow was falling heavily, and was melting as it fell. The tall, gaunt houses, unlit from roof to base-

ment, seemed to soak the night with their own darkness; and from every roof and window-sill, and spout and gargoyle, the melting snow dripped incessantly.

'Confound the fellow!' said Kenyon, as he walked along. 'I was out of tune with the night until his memory came to me; and he puts me in tune with it. A dismal tune it is, too.'

Except for the constant dripping of the melting snow, and the sound of his own footsteps, the night was noiseless. A score of yards away the street gas-lamps were invisible, lost in the drifting fall of futile snow, which blackened as it touched the pavement.

Kenyon, muttering, with occasional ejaculations of discontent against himself, against the object of his thoughts and against the weather, walked on until he came to a spot where the road divided. On the left there lay a handsome, spacious street, and on the right a mere lane, leading, as he knew, to a congeries of dirty and intricate by-ways.

'Now, in my student days,' said he, pausing, 'it might have been a dangerous business to take the shorter and directer way alone, and at this time of night. But nowadays old Nap has worked such wonders, and the new gendarmerie are such clever fellows, the place ought to be safe enough. I think I know the road, and it will save me at least a mile. Here goes!' He marched on sturdily and in silence, absorbed in his own thoughts; but, in the course of some twenty minutes, pulled up short beneath a projecting

gas-lamp and looked about him somewhat doubtfully.

'My memory,' he said, half laughingly, 'is less trustworthy than I fancied it. I don't know this quartier certainly, and there is not a soul of whom I can ask the way. Where could I have gone wrong? I fancy I should have held straight along Pewter Pot Street; and if that be so, I stand too much to the right. Well, then, the next turn to the left will do it.'

He took the next turning to the left, and found himself in a street where the odour of decomposed vegetable matter rose heavily to his nostrils, unconquered by the falling snow. The filthy road was illumined by one solitary blotch of yellow light. This light gleamed dimly through the greasy panes of a gargote, and from within came a sound of voices.

'Help, at last,' said Kenyon gaily to himself, as he pushed open a door which shrieked upon its hinges.

Half a dozen people—dull-eyed, vacuous, drunken—bleared at him sullenly as he entered. A woman, with a red handkerchief bound in slovenly picturesqueness about her head, sat behind a little counter, amidst a disorderly array of bottles and dirty glasses.

Kenyon approached, and asked his way.

'Monsieur will take something to drink?' said the woman.

'But yes; if madame wishes it,' said Kenyon. 'Give me a small glass of cognac.'

He drew from his left hand a furred glove, and the eye of one Gustave Peltzer, a personage well known to the police of Paris, lost their vacuous and sullen glare, and, all on a sudden, sparkled brightly, as though they reflected the glitter of the valuable diamond which shone on Kenyon's hand.

The visitor, to get at his pocket, unbuttoned the heavy overcoat he wore, and Gustave Peltzer's eyes sparkled again to see the heavy gold chain which swung across his waistcoat.

Kenyon laid down a five-franc piece upon the wooden counter. The woman took it, and threw it into a drawer. 'We have no little money here to-night, monsieur.'

At this, Kenyon quietly rebuttoned his coat and drew on his glove, looked calmly round him, and, for the first time, appreciated the chances of the situation. 'Good, madame,' he responded, cheerfully enough. 'Be so kind as to direct me.'

The woman looked from one to another of her customers before responding. She met one pair of eyes alone—the eyes of Gustave Peltzer, still glistening with the light of Kenyon's diamond in them. The other men were sunk in a drunken stupidity, and had no answer to give to her inquiring look.

'Will madame be so good as to direct me?' said Kenyon, once more naming his destination.

'But willingly,' said the woman in the red head-dress. 'Leaving the door, you turn to the left; you

take the first street to the left again, and you are on the Boulevard.'

Kenyon, with a casual 'Thank you,' touched his glass with his lips, reset it on the counter, half raised his hat, and left the place.

'That is a strange way to the Boulevard, maman,' said Gustave Peltzer.

'Why——' responded Madame; 'if it gives a poor and honest man an opportunity——'

Gustave Peltzer rose without so much as looking at the landlady, and, leaving the house, followed in the footsteps of Robert Kenyon.

The snow, which had fallen persistently for an hour or two, had just begun to take a grey and feathery hold upon the greasy pavement. The dripping from the low eaves of the houses still continued, but had a dragging and relenting sound. A footstep on the flagstones left a black oval smear; and Gustave Peltzer, with a ragged overcoat drawn tight about him, and his hat jammed low upon his brows, could not only hear the footsteps of the man before him, but could trace them as he walked.

The footsteps before him went on, with a something firm and resolute in their sound, which daunted the skulking rascal in the rear. Gustave was a jail-bird, and ill-nourished. He contrasted, mentally, the want of width and weight in his own starven frame with the broad shoulders, florid features, and deep chest of the man who owned the diamond and the watchchain.

The contrast was unpleasing; but Gustave proposed to balance it—nursing in his right-hand pocket a brutal weapon of whalebone, heavily topped with lead. He had a lurking way with him, which would have betrayed him to a member of the protective force of any country in the world. His very step was thievish —*miching mallecho*—and his eyes shot from side to side as though he mistrusted the darkness; as, perhaps, he did.

The leader, following the directions of the woman of the restaurant, took the first turning to the left, and the first turning to the left again. He walked on, now humming a fragment of an air, now silent, until he found further progress arrested by a blank brick wall. At this, he turned and looked about him, with an ejaculation of momentary ill-humour. A score of yards away, a slouching figure shuffled towards him.

'My friend,' he said, in his cheery English voice, 'can you direct me to the Boulevard des Italiens?'

Gustave Peltzer shuffled, sideways, into a little alley which lay to his left.

'Holloa! there,' cried Kenyon. 'Do you hear? You, there! Do you hear?'

Peltzer shuffled back from the alley into the shabby street, and approached subserviently. 'Monsieur,' he said, 'did me the honour to address me.'

'I asked the way to the Boulevard des Italiens,' said Kenyon.

Ah!' returned Peltzer. 'Will monsieur permit

that I show him the way? In these hard times, a poor man is glad to earn a sou or two.'

'Certainly,' said Kenyon. 'Show the way.'

'Will monsieur follow me?' said Peltzer; and, the Englishman assenting by a mere nod and murmur, he shuffled on before.

Half-way down the street, he crossed, manœuvring so as to fall behind. At the moment when he felt himself hidden from his stalwart companion's eye, he whipped his brutal weapon from his pocket and struck a desperate blow with it.

Kenyon's hat spun into the roadway, and Kenyon himself turned upon his assailant. But the blow was repeated, and repeated so swiftly and with such force that he fell to the ground with his arms thrown out crosswise, and lay there still as a stone.

The footpad knelt above him with a feverish, trembling haste, dragged the glove from the impassive left hand, and was fumbling for the diamond ring, when the sudden crash of a door thrown open brought him to his feet, and the sight of a figure standing in the doorway sent him flying as hard as his shaking legs could carry him.

The unintentional rescuer seemed to take in the whole situation at a glance, and raced after the flying figure; but Peltzer turned and twisted with so much dexterity that the pursuer lost him, and stood breathing hard in the roadway. In some half minute he became aware that the pursued had doubled back

upon his own course, and had returned almost to the street from which he started. He might, indeed, have returned to the street itself, for the low-browed alley in which he had taken refuge when the rescuer last caught sight of him led back to it. The newcomer took that course, glancing suspiciously into all nooks and corners, but finding nothing to give sign of the fugitive's whereabouts. This fact of itself was, perhaps, proof of some preoccupation, for at his feet the signs lay plain for any man to read. Even in that dim light he could have tracked the flying footsteps by the marks they left upon the pavement; but he never so much as thought of this.

Once in the alley, a single turn led him to the street he had originally quitted, and there a mere score of footsteps brought him to Kenyon's side. As he stood and looked down upon the prostrate figure, he saw the white left hand lying helpless on the dark cloth of the overcoat, exactly as Peltzer's hands had left it, and on one of the fingers of the hand the glimmer of a ring. He looked up and down the street, glanced swiftly and nervously at doors and windows, and then, stooping, took the helpless hand within his own, and examined the ring more closely. Then, with a new nervous look upon him, he set his arms about the prostrate man, and by a great effort lifted him and staggered with him through the open doorway.

He walked unsteadily under his heavy burden along

a narrow passage, and at the end of it came ponderously in contact with a door which, being ill-secured yielded to the double weight and opened on a squalid room, lit by the flame of a single candle. A mean bed occupied one corner of this apartment, and upon it the rescuer laid the rescued. Then he looked about him, repressing his own laboured breath, and listening, less with the air of a man who had just prevented robbery than with the air of a man who meditated it.

Except for a sigh or two from Kenyon's lips, the riot of his own heart, and now and then the asthmatic wheeze of his own breathing, he heard nothing; but his face was full of guilt and fear. Suddenly he started, and with steps as mean and treacherous as those of the thief he had lately scared, he traversed the narrow passage and came upon the street. There he looked about for the fallen hat, and, having found it, re-entered the house, lightly and noiselessly closed the door behind him, and returned to the chamber.

II.

THE room was large and bare, with plastered walls and an uncarpeted floor. It was furnished with a couple of rush-bottomed chairs, and a large unclothed wooden table, fixed to the wall by iron clamps, and supported at the outer edge by iron rods. This table was strewn with a heterogeneous assortment of books and manuscripts, bottles of glass and stone, iron, and copper tubes, glittering implements of bizarre and bloodthirsty appearance, an electric machine, balls of silken twine, and a miniature furnace, with a crucible and glass retorts. Above the table was a plank of rough deal, serving as a shelf, and supporting a large jar of spirits of wine, in which grinned a dreadful something like a miniature monkey, blackened by the action of the spirit, and hideous to behold. The air was heavy with an odour which was at once acrid and greasy, like that of a dissecting-room.

The rescuer took the candle from the littered table, walked to the bedside, and looked at the injured man. At the first glance he started, and, dropping upon his

knees, set his face close to the other's, and peered at him eagerly for a minute or so. Then, rising slowly, with bewildered air, he replaced the candle upon the table, seated himself mechanically, and, with his hands upon his knees, stared straight before him. In a while, he again took up the candle, approached the bed, and peered at the unconscious face with short-sighted eyes. Then, again, he set down the candle, and resumed his seat.

'There may be,' he said, speaking in English, in a mumbling voice—'there may be stranger things than this; but of all the strange things I have ever known to happen, this is the strangest. I should know him amongst a million.'

Kenyon moaned, and stirred upon the bed; and the rescuer, rising hastily, but with an exaggerated caution, stepped on tiptoe to the table, and, pushing about with his hands amongst the litter of papers and miscellaneous articles which covered it, found, after a minute's searching, a pair of tinted glasses.

These he polished, nervously, with the skirt of his coat, and then set them astride his nose. He disordered his already tangled hair, and pulled it low about his forehead; and then, standing with an air of irresolution and bewilderment in the middle of the room, looked furtively over his glasses at Kenyon, who moved and moaned again. Whilst he still stood there, Kenyon opened his eyes and struggled, with a wild look, into a half-reclining posture.

'What's all this? Where am I?'

'Plait-il, monsieur,' said the other, in a shaky voice.

Kenyon turned his face towards him, and dropped back upon the pillow.

'Monsieur is English?' said the rescuer. 'Unhappily, I do not speak that language, though I read it. Monsieur said——'

'I beg your pardon,' said the Englishman, speaking, this time, in the language of his companion; 'I forgot I was in Paris. I remember now—I was attacked in the street—I was struck from behind.'

'Yes. I came up just as you fell, or it would have gone hard with you. The man who attacked you saved himself, and I brought you in here. It is nothing serious, I fancy; but you must rest a little. But I have not yet had time to see if you are injured. Permit me, sir. I am a doctor of medicine.'

'So am I,' said Kenyon. 'I am not much hurt, I fancy.'

The rescuer passed a hand, which felt trained and skilful, about Kenyon's head.

'There is a little bleeding here,' he said; 'it will be well to staunch it. A cold water compress will serve.'

He turned over the contents of a tattered basket, which lay in one corner of the room, and, having found a piece of linen there, tore it into strips, soaked the strips in water, and bound up the wound.

'It is little,' he said. 'It was the fall rather than the blow which stunned you; and yet the blow was a

shrewd one. There is a lump as large as an egg here.'

'You are very good,' said Kenyon feebly; 'and I scarcely know how to thank you.' His French was fluent and correct, more English in rhythm than in accent. 'But it is late, and I deprive you of your bed.'

He made a motion as if to rise, but his companion's hand restrained him.

'You are not well enough to move yet. Repose a little.'

The slight exertion Kenyon had made had turned his face pale, and had made his breath more irregular.

'I keep late hours always,' said the rescuer, 'and should not go to bed yet, if I were alone. Rest a little; and then, if I can find a fiacre, you shall go home. I am afraid you will not be strong enough to walk to-night.'

'You are very good,' said the patient again. 'I am ashamed to give you so much trouble. Did you see the man who struck me?'

'Yes. I pursued him; but he was too nimble, and I lost him. It is a bad neighbourhood; and I was alone and unarmed.'

'The neighbourhood used to be bad enough,' said Kenyon, 'in my student days, when I lived here years ago; but I had thought that it was safer now.'

'Your student days!' said the rescuer, drawing his chair a little nearer. 'Forgive me if I am in error,

but I fancy that I have the pleasure to know you. I do not recall your name, but were you not under Poul, at the Hôtel Dieu, from '57 to '60 ?'

'Yes,' said Kenyon, turning his eyes upon him; 'I was there. My name is Kenyon—Robert Kenyon.'

'Ah !' said the other quickly, 'the Englishman ! I remember now. I should have known before. I was there in the same years. You may not remember me. I was of another clique than yours. My name is Auguste Moreau. Your cousin,' he added, 'was a close comrade of mine.'

Kenyon's eye travelled over the sordid litter of the room, and then returned to his companion. The rescuer continued. 'Ah ! you note the place. I have fallen upon evil times, Monsieur Kenyon; but your cousin and I are still close friends.'

'Oh !' said Kenyon, struggling up again, 'he is alive yet, is he ?'

'You did not know that ?' asked the other, in a voice of surprise.

'Know it ?' said Kenyon. 'No, I neither knew it nor cared to know it.'

'I can understand that,' said Auguste Moreau. 'But he is poorer, and in greater misery than even you would wish him to be, though all he has told me were true ten times over.'

'Told you ?' said Kenyon, falling back again. 'What has he told you ?' His voice trailed off so as he spoke, and fell into such a feeble indistinctness,

that his companion rose, and, before replying, sought and found a blue phial amongst the littered contents of the table, and pouring out a carefully measured quantity into a glass, held it to the wounded man's lips, and besought him to drink.

Kenyon obeyed, and a moment later a faint flush of colour touched his cheek.

'What has he told you?' he repeated then.

'He told me,' said the other, 'years ago, and has told me a thousand times since, that he wronged you greatly. He says you loved a young girl, you and he, and that she liked you the better of the two. It was before you came to Paris; and you, though you were cousins, barely knew each other. He invented, in his jealousy, a lying story about you. The story was believed for a time, and he had hope of being accepted by the girl; but he was discovered and disgraced. It cost him all his fortune, for his father cast him off. He has been bitterly repentant ever since.'

'Naturally,' said Kenyon, 'he has been bitterly repentant ever since.'

'Ah, sir,' said Moreau eagerly and quickly, 'it is not only that he lost his fortune; he repents the act itself.'

'A scoundrel always repents the act itself,' said Kenyon, 'when the act itself fails, and has been punished.'

'He has suffered,' said Moreau; 'he has suffered bitterly and profoundly. He lives in a misery as

complete as this.' He waved his hand to indicate the squalid room.

'I am not sorry to hear it,' said Kenyon.

'Sir,' said Moreau, 'I am a believer in a Divine Providence. Why is it that you are struck down by a strange hand in a foreign city at my door? Why is it that at the moment when you are struck I open my door, by pure chance, to look upon the night, and am so able to save you from further violence? Why is it that, after all this lapse of years, I am able to recognise your face? This is the hand of God, Monsieur Kenyon. But for this you would not have known that your unhappy cousin lived; but for this you would never have known that he lives in misery.'

'Providence,' said Kenyon feebly, but chuckling, in spite of feebleness, as he spoke, 'might have brought a less disagreeable fact to mind in a less disagreeable manner.'

'You will not refuse him your forgiveness now?' said Moreau—'you will not refuse him your assistance?'

'Ecoutez!' said Kenyon. 'The blackguard was my cousin, but we were pretty nearly strangers. I hardly knew him. It is a hundred to one that, if I met him in the street to-morrow, I should not know him now. He behaved like a rascal, not once, or twice, or thrice, but always, and consistently. I have neither pity nor help for him.'

'Sir,' said Moreau, 'when last I saw him, and he

spoke of you, he shed tears. Should I tell him of your refusal of forgiveness, he would break his heart. He blessed God that his own wicked designs were frustrated. He is conscious of the wrong he did you. He repents sincerely. Believe me, Monsieur Kenyon, he is a man with a conscience.'

'I remember,' said Kenyon, 'that he always kept a conscience.'

Moreau was silent for the space of some three or four minutes. 'Let me tell him, at least,' he said then, 'that you forgive him. I do not think he will trouble you for more than that.'

'My good sir,' said Kenyon, 'it would be easy to say that I forgive him; but I am in the habit of saying what I mean; and I could never mean it.'

'The word would cost you little,' said Moreau.

'Monsieur Moreau,' said Kenyon, 'I am infinitely obliged to you. Do you think you could add to all your other kindnesses by finding me a carriage?'

'You are not fit to move yet,' said Moreau. 'If your friends are in anxiety concerning you, I can find you a messenger, late as it is. In the meantime, you had far better rest.'

Kenyon tried to rise, but his head seemed made of lead, and he fell back and lay still, groaning with impatience. 'I have no friends in Paris,' he said, a minute later. 'There is nobody to be anxious for me here.'

'That is well,' said Moreau. 'In an hour or two

you will be better. Try to sleep.' He drew himself away quietly, and, taking a seat at the table, with his back turned to his patient, began to arrange the scattered manuscripts there.

'You meet my cousin Gabriel sometimes, you say?' said Kenyon.

'Often,' said Moreau drily.

'You may tell the rascal this,' said Kenyon, half groaning: 'the share of the money that would have been his, if he had not behaved as he did, may be his still. It is not much, whatever he may say; but whatever it is, he can have it, on one condition. Tell him to write to my lawyer, giving his address. The money shall be sent to him, on one condition.' He paused there.

'What condition?'

'That he makes no approach to me. Tell him that if he writes, he must make that a distinct promise, and he shall have the money.'

'I will tell him,' said Moreau. His fingers toyed with a little morocco case, which fell open as he played with it. A hypodermic syringe dropped from the case, and he tried its point upon his finger. 'You have no other message for him?'

Kenyon made no answer; but, after a while, groping with feeble hands, he managed to unfasten his overcoat, and to draw a pocket-book from his breast-pocket. Opening this, he found a bundle of bank-notes, and, selecting from the rest one for a hundred

francs, he dropped it on the bed, and, restoring the others to their place, and the book to his pocket, spoke again.

Moreau's ears had been attentive to the rustle of the crisp bank-paper.

'Will you permit me, Monsieur Moreau,' said Kenyon, 'to make you my almoner? There is much poverty in this neighbourhood, doubtless; and you, as a medical man, are sure to be in close contact with it.'

He searched blindly for the note, and, finding it, raised it an inch or two; and Moreau accepted it.

'I thank you, sir,' he said; and, with that, resumed his seat.

Then there was silence for a long time—a silence so profound that the dripping of the melting snow without was clearly audible. Moreau's own breathing seemed exaggeratedly noisy to him. The breathing of the man upon the bed seemed loud and stertorous; and, for some reason, the rescuer's nerves were so perturbed that every now and then he started at the fancy of a third breathing, which seemed, when it touched his ears at all, to be low, and smothered, and irregular. He listened hard, until the constant drip, drip, dripping of the melting snow and his patient's breathing were mingled with a sound like that of a murmuring tide; but even through this there broke, or seemed to break, the real or imaginary sound of the muffled and irregular breathing of some third person near at hand. He sat for an hour like a statue, and

then, turning slowly, looked towards the bed. The candle was waning fast by this time, and a great red wick toppled sideways. The room was almost dark. He snuffed the light, and, taking the candle in his hand, stole stealthily, step by step, across the room, and peered once more into Kenyon's face. The wounded man was sleeping, and sleeping so soundly that even when Moreau lowered the candle to within an inch or two of his beard his eyelids did not even flicker. His breathing had settled to the steady pulse of sleep; but his inert form was no stiller than that of the waking man beside him. Suddenly, with a movement almost as noiseless as it was rapid, Moreau turned and crossed the chamber. He took from the shelf above the table a small stone bottle, thickly smeared at the nozzle with yellow wax. He broke the wax away, and, having removed the cork, he took the hypodermic syringe from its case, delicately inserted the point of the instrument into the bottle, and then glided like a shadow to the bed and bent over the sleeping figure. With a touch as light as air, he turned down the collar of the overcoat and bared the neck, and, with one rapid motion of the thumb, he shot the contents of the syringe into the selected vein. The colour in the sleeper's face flickered out, a momentary tremulousness agitated the skin, and one quivering breath passed his lips.

That breath was Robert Kenyon's last.

III.

Auguste Moreau was conscious of having done a dreadful thing, but he was also conscious of a reason for it. To commit murder without reason would be, surely, to touch the limit of unreasonableness. Robert Kenyon had had many things the possession of which seemed highly desirable to Auguste Moreau. Some of them the killing of him secured at once; some of them it seemed likely to secure. Amongst the things to be secured at once were any and every scrap of paper the dead man had about him, his money, his jewellery, his very sleeve-links, since they bore his initials, and might serve to proclaim his identity.

Auguste Moreau seemed peculiarly desirous that his victim's identity should remain obscure when his body should come to be found. He made a careful search of Kenyon's clothing, and wherever he found his victim's initials he cut them away. The parchment tabs within the collar of undercoat and overcoat, inscribed 'Robert Kenyon, Esq.,' he cut away with a bistoury, and, folding them neatly, bestowed

them in his own waistcoat pocket. The ring upon the left hand little finger had an engraved cornelian for a seal. Moreau tugged at this quite vainly; for the middle joint was enlarged, and the ring was a fixture there. But he solved the difficulty at last, by filing through the thinner part of the ring, and bending it backwards until it quitted the finger.

He went through the whole of this dreadful business with an apparent calm, wondering at himself, now and again, that it should be so. He had done many things in his lifetime, at the dictates of necessity, of which neither his own conscience nor the general sentiments of humanity could approve; but this was his first essay at murder; and he had hitherto supposed that murder was a nervous sort of act, and could only be performed under circumstances of special rage—an act into which even a man with a conscience might be surprised, but which he would assuredly regret at once. He was surprised to discover that he had no regrets, and to feel as if the whole terrible thing were an affair of every day, with only an underlying hint of horror in it.

Suddenly, and without any warning, so far as he had noticed, the candle fell into its socket, and flared out. Then, whilst he groped tremblingly to secure materials for a light, he began to know that this underlying hint of horror was capable of expansion into an overwhelming and all-shadowing fear. When he had found the candle and the matches, he fumbled with

them for a full minute; his knees knocked together in the extremity of his fear, and his hands trembled so wildly that he could scarce bring the match and the match-box together. When he had succeeded in getting a light, this sudden gust of nervous terror died away; but Moreau was no longer the uninterested personage he had been, and his glances towards the bed began to take a hurried and furtive fearfulness. He had found a sheet of paper, pen and ink, and half a dozen wafers. He wrote, turning, after the formation of almost every letter, one swift and fear-stricken glance over his shoulder. "Quitté la ville. De retour Samedi." He tried to moisten the wafers with his tongue, but this was a failure, for his tongue and lips were dry as sand. He seized and emptied a carafe of stale water, keeping his eyes fixed on the dead man's face as he threw his head slowly backwards in the act of drinking; and then, backing from the bed, and not once venturing to look away from it, he opened the door of the room, and, with groping fingers, affixed the writing to one of the panels on the outer side.

There was a cracked fragment of mirror hanging upon the wall, and, when he had closed the door, he advanced to this, and selecting a pair of surgical shears from amongst the scattered implements on the table, cut away his tangled growth of beard, trimming it close to the outline of his face, and shore the elf-locks of his hair. This, at another time, might have seemed to take a score of years from his apparent

age; but, at that moment, his age was the precise age of abject horror, and mere time had no question with it. He made an indeterminate attempt to draw away an overcoat, which had been loosely thrown upon the bed, and was now partly covered by Robert Kenyon's body. But, after one or two feeble and ineffectual tuggings at it, made with a frightened slyness, as if he dreaded to awake a sleeper, he relinquished it, and moved backwards from the body. He took up a battered and greasy hat, and, having set it on before the mirror, without so much as a glance at his own reflection there, he stooped over the candle and blew feebly at the flame. The flame wavered, and he made no further attempt to extinguish it; but, shuffling backward step by step, with his eyes on Kenyon's face, fumbled for the handle of the door behind him, opened it, passed out backwards, closed it, and locked it between him and the murdered man. Then he seemed to recover something of his courage, and passing both hands over his face, he gave a gasping sob of relief, moved swiftly to the door, passed out, and, at a good round pace, walked down the street.

His receding figure had scarcely vanished at the corner of the street when the door he had closed behind him but two minutes earlier reopened, and who should emerge from it but that same Gustave Peltzer who had been scared from his harpy work by Auguste Moreau an hour or two before! Gustave was in a state of high excitement; his eyes glittered;

his feverish footsteps went miching silently and swiftly over the snow-covered pavement; and when he reached the foot of the street he ran from corner to corner, peering round each, like an ape or a cat, or any cowardly sly thing bent on mischief. He sighted Auguste Moreau, and he followed. The dripping of the melting snow had ceased; a keen wind was blowing; and the snow lay crisp upon the pavement. A full moon, struggling against long streaks of diaphanous cloud, shed a light which was sometimes almost as clear as that of day, and sometimes quite illusory.

Gustave Peltzer, skipping and hopping noiselessly, crouching in doorways, peering from entries, taking skirmisher's advantage of every abutment upon his way, followed Moreau for hours. The chase seemed likely to be a long one, for the murderer walked aimlessly and fast. Sometimes he threaded so rapidly the labyrinth of little streets that Peltzer sweated with an apish anxiety lest he should lose him; but the pursuer's knowledge of the blackguard quarter served him well, and he never missed his quarry for more than a minute at a time. The moon went down, and the keen wind cleared away the clouds which lingered in remembrance of the snow-storm. For a while, the sky seemed black, and then, lightening a little, it stole through all the intervening grades to the bright flame of early day. People began to move about the hitherto deserted streets; and the pursuer felt himself grow a little bolder, though he dared not, even now,

approach too near. Once, when the early traffic had grown rapid, and there were many hurrying footsteps in the street, he came near to betraying himself; for, having allowed Moreau to round a corner, fifty yards in front of him, he had come swiftly up behind, and, turning the corner suddenly, had well-nigh run his quarry bodily down. The man stood thinking, with the tip of a forefinger touching his lower lip, and his eyes bent frowningly upon the ground. Peltzer, with bent head and fluttering heart, slunk past him, and, glancing over his shoulder, saw him suddenly straighten himself, with a gesture of resolve, and set forward once more at a faster pace that ever. From this moment, Moreau began to peer, in his short-sighted way, at every public clock, and once or twice paused for a second to look in at the newly-opened watchmakers' windows. His footsteps always quickened after such a pause; and it was evident, now, that he was walking with a purpose.

To the honest Peltzer's disgust, the purpose revealed itself when Moreau reached the Northern Station, and, entering hastily, demanded a third-class ticket for London. Peltzer, hovering near, behind an opportune pile of luggage, heard the other's colloquy with the clerk.

When would the train start? In ten minutes.—When was it due at Boulogne? At such an hour.—When did the boat reach Dover? At such an hour.—When did the train reach London? At such another

hour.—Could he break the journey at Boulogne? Assuredly.

Moreau had tendered that hundred-franc note which Robert Kenyon had asked him to devote to the benefit of the poor of his neighbourhood; and now, clenching his change in one hand and his coupon in the other, he lounged up and down the platform. Peltzer, regarding him from behind the opportune pile of luggage, cursed heartily, and with convincing emphasis, as his own fingers groped in his empty pockets. It seemed not improbable that Monsieur Peltzer had some urgent reason for following the personage who had taken his own half-accomplished villainy from his hands. He had never been a very agreeable man to look upon; but now, as he gnawed his hairy knuckles, and glared after his escaping quarry, he looked quite diabolical. Suddenly, with a blasphemous expletive of relief and welcome, such as only a Parisian blackguard can accomplish, he reached out a lean arm, and, catching at the sleeve of a passer-by, called him by his name.

'Sullivan!'

The man thus addressed turned and recognised his captor with a notable absence of enthusiasm.

'What is the matter with you?' he asked, in English-sounding French. 'Don't pull my arm off.'

'One word,' said the other, still holding him, and touching with a finger of his disengaged hand the

coupon the new-comer had flourished as he walked.

'You go to London?'

'Yes. What is the matter?'

'You have five minutes; give me one.'

Without waiting for 'Yea' or 'Nay,' he dragged his companion to the door leading to the platform. Moreau was standing with his back towards them, scarce ten yards off.

'You see him, that man there?'

'Well?'

'He goes to London also.'

'That is very interesting. Thank you.' The new-comer spoke gravely, almost solemnly. He was a man rather under the middle size, unmistakably British in build and face, with smooth-shaven cheeks and chin, and curiously mobile features. His generally pervading expression was one of half-apologetic, humorous impudence.

'Where that man goes,' said Peltzer, speaking with so much eagerness that one word tripped up the other, 'you must go.'

'Tenez donc,' responded Mr. Sullivan, with a repetition of his former manner.

'Mille diables!' broke out Peltzer, 'have I the air of jesting? Do I speak to laugh? Listen. We are wasting time. You must follow him. All there is to know of him, you must learn; and you must not let anything take you from the track until you have learned his name and have run him to earth, where

he can be found when wanted. Will you do this?'

'Why should I do it?' demanded Sullivan, not unnaturally.

'Because there is money to be got by doing it—perhaps much money—in all cases, money—money enough to pay you. Find all you can, and bring or send the information to the old place—you remember?'

'I remember; but this is all very mysterious.'

'It will not be mysterious long. Will you do it?'

'Well,' said Sullivan, 'I may be pledging myself to follow the Wandering Jew, for all I know. Tell me something definite.'

'I can tell you,' said Peltzer, 'nothing more than I have already told you. There is money to be made by it for both of us. I cannot tell how much, but in all probability much. Much. It is possible that neither you nor I might have to work again.'

At this beatific prospect Mr. Sullivan smiled. A life of absolute idleness had always commended itself to him as the sweetest of possible dreams. It had never been more than a dream; it had never seemed likely to be more than a dream. The smile of charmed hope faded on his face.

'Why don't you follow him yourself?' he asked.

'Imbecile!' said the other., 'I have not a sou, not a centime. Mère de Dieu! are you blind?' he demanded, thrusting his jaw almost into the doubtful face of his

companion. 'Are you mad? Do you know when one is in earnest?'

There could be no uncertainty left as to the reality of Monsieur Peltzer's desire. Every inch of him was alive with it. The doubt passed from Sullivan's face; and Peltzer saw it.

'You will go—you will follow him?' he said.

'All right,' answered Sullivan. 'There is the signal. Where is he going to?'

'London,' answered Peltzer, wringing him hard by the hand. 'Don't lose him. It may be the making of us both.'

Moreau had already stepped into a carriage; Sullivan followed, choosing a compartment at a little distance. Tickets were examined, doors were slammed, and the train began to move.

Peltzer emerged from behind his sheltering pile of luggage, and flattened his nose against the glass of the door which barred him from the platform. The train rapidly gathered way, and had just disappeared from sight when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a voice spoke in terms of almost affectionate jocosity.

'Aha!' said the voice. 'The dear Peltzer! He is wanted.'

Peltzer turned, and recognised an old acquaintance. He had no welcome for him, and not even the faintest desire in the world to accompany him; but he went away meekly, and without complaint, at his new

companion's summons. When they had walked some hundreds of yards, he looked up, with a diabolical grin, and asked swiftly:

'What is it for?'

The new companion, who wore the uniform of the Parisian police, responded, 'Burglary.'

Monsieur Peltzer sighed, and he and the gendarme pursued their way in silence.

IV.

'THOMAS!'

'Hilloa, missis!'

'Wake up, do. I never saw such a man in my days. Here's the coach coming up hill, and two gentlemen on the roof.'

Thomas left the comfortable shelter of the chimney-corner in the kitchen of that excellent hostelry the King and Constitution, raised his arms above his head, with a prodigious yawn, and quitted the house, in the act of struggling into a cut-away coat of bygone fashion. As the Meldon coach jingled to the door, he stood to receive what custom it might bring. Over the ample lintel swung a sign-board, proclaiming to the travelling world that Thomas Orgle kept that house for the entertainment of wayfarers, and that the best accommodation might be had within for man and beast; and Thomas Orgle glanced upwards to this announcement now and then, as if with a kind of approval. As Mrs. Orgle had announced, there were two travellers by the coach; and the worthy woman smiled, in anticipation of profit, as both descended.

The first was a slightly-built man, of thirty-five or so, quietly dressed in dark tweeds. His face was clean shaven; and this fact went against him. A moustache would have been of considerable advantage to him, since it would have served to hide, at least, the corners of his mouth. His features were well enough formed; but the eyes were furtive, and the lips, if there be any truth in the science of physiognomy, or in human instinct, were cruel. He nodded familiarly to the landlord and his wife.

'Good-evening, Mrs. Orgle; good-evening, Orgle. You have not forgotten me, I hope?'

'Why, no, sir,' said Mr. Orgle, in a slow and deliberate manner—'we haven't forgotten you, Mr. Gabriel.'

The second traveller, who had been giving voluble directions regarding the descent from the coach roof of baggage whose value must have been inversely proportionable to its bulk, to account for his anxiety concerning it, cast a bird-like side-glance at Mr. Gabriel, and went on chattering.

'It's a long time since we met,' said Mr. Gabriel.

'Why, yes, sir,' returned Orgle, scratching his shaven cheek, and speaking with a dry deliberateness of manner. 'It is a longish time.'

His way of saying it might have seemed, to a sensitive man, to indicate that he could have borne the time of separation to be longer.

'I can have a bedroom here, I suppose, and

something to eat?—anything will serve. And can you give me a messenger to carry a letter to the Lodge?'

'We can do that for you, sir,' said the landlord, with an air of guarding himself. 'Missis! Mr. Gabriel wants a bedroom.'

Mr. Gabriel followed his hostess indoors and upstairs; and the landlord was left alone by the departing coach with traveller number two.

'Good-evening, Mr. Orgle,' said the traveller, executing a little impromptu dance in the roadway, with his hands in his pockets. 'You are Mr. Orgle, I believe?'

The landlord pointed with his thumb over his shoulder to the sign, and made no further answer.

'Quite so,' said the traveller, with another flourish of his legs; 'exactly so—the King and Constitution! But isn't that a little out of date—*King* and Constitution?'

'That was the sign in my grandfather's time,' said Mr. Orgle; 'and it might have been in *his* grandfather's time as well, for aught I know. They say it's bad luck to change the sign of a house of entertainment. Why it should be so is more than I know; but so it is, according to all accounts.'

'This promises well,' said the traveller. 'You behold in me, Mr. Orgle, a seeker after rural quiet.'

'After what?' said the landlord inquiringly.

'Rural quiet,' repeated the traveller; 'rustic repose

—bucolic beatitude.' He paused for a minute, and then added, smiling benignly, 'Agricolian anesthesia, Mr. Orgle.'

Mr. Orgle was doubtful as to the stranger's meaning, but he was not doubtful that the stranger was chaffing him. Any attempt in that direction would have been ponderously resented in the case of ninety-nine men in a hundred; but the stranger's smile, though recognisant of his own humour, had in it a certain recognition of the speaker's irresponsibility, and an almost boyish appeal to the sufferance of the person he addressed, that would have disarmed the resentment of the dullest. He was an entirely new development to Mr. Orgle, and on that account alone should, in the nature of things, have been unwelcome and suspicious; but, somewhat to his surprise, the landlord, who was rather of a bulldog turn as a general thing, found himself grinning in answer to the irresistibly insinuating smile of the stranger.

'I have found it,' continued Mr. Sullivan. 'I have found the rural quiet prescribed by my medical practitioner for the rehabilitation of a jaded brain and an exhausted nervous system.' He jerked his hat to the back of his head by a single bird-like movement, and smiled round upon the landscape.

'If it's quiet as you're after,' said the landlord, 'you can get it here, and enough on it.'

'Good,' said Mr. Sullivan. 'Here I shall renew my youth—like the Orgle.' His smile would have been

enough to disarm anger, even if the landlord had understood the full atrocity of the pun. 'I will begin the process at once, if you please, landlord, with eggs and bacon.'

'There's cold beef, if you would rather have it, sir,' said the landlord.

'No,' said Mr. Sullivan, poising his head meditatively on one side. 'Eggs and bacon are more rural. Give me eggs and bacon!'

Another quarter of an hour saw him seated at a heavy oak table, of antique fashion, before a liberal dish of the viands he had selected, and a tankard of foaming home-brewed ale. The landlord, at his guest's request, provided himself with a tankard also, and kept him company. The landlord was, in his way, an eminently respectable man, but somewhat thick-witted; and to him his guest seemed to be a gentleman of uncommonly pleasing manner and unequalled conversational resource. If, as a conversationalist, he had a fault, it lay in a tendency to monopolise the talking. He talked a good deal; and his apparently inconsequent questions and observations drew from Mr. Orgle more information about the other traveller, upstairs, than the landlord altogether knew that he was giving. He got but little in return for it, although much of Mr. Sullivan's fluent talk was about himself, and, in his liberal flow of anecdote, experience, and adventure, his own personality bore a distinguishing part.

The new arrival seemed the most candid, the most childish, open-hearted of men; and after an hour spent in his society, the landlord felt as if he had known him all his life. As a matter of fact, he knew nothing, and even a little less than nothing. Before the most rudimentary knowledge of Mr. Sullivan's character could be reached, it was necessary to know one thing about him. He was as polished and as readily inventive a liar as walked. He had a natural bent towards the art, and sedulous practice had so strengthened native faculty that, when he sat in Mr. Orgle's parlour, he was probably unique in Britain.

The substance of what the landlord had to tell was this: The traveller upstairs was Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, a distant cousin of Mr. Kenyon, of the Lodge. Mr. Kenyon, of the Lodge, was an extremely popular gentleman — a gentleman universally respected — a gentleman whose hand was in the habit of going to his pocket for the relief of all and sundry who asked assistance from him — a comfortable, cheery gentleman.

Mr. Gabriel had hardly been known in that neighbourhood since his boyhood. He was known pretty well until he was some eighteen years of age, and then went 'somewheres abroad,' the landlord vaguely said, to study. Mr. Gabriel was not a cheery gentleman; he was not a free-handed gentleman; he had a sort of a sullen and a haughty way with him. It was

likely enough, the landlord thought, that Mr. Gabriel might be warmly received at the Lodge when Mr. Kenyon should come home again. Mr. Kenyon was away in Paris for a time. The landlord happened to know the cause of Mr. Kenyon's absence, for one or two of the Lodge servants were in the habit of calling occasionally at the King and Constitution, and exchanging a friendly chat with their old fellow-servant. Mr. Kenyon then, it seemed, like the warm-hearted, amiable personage he was, had made an express journey to Paris for the purpose of meeting an old schoolfellow and fellow-student who had been coffee-planting in Brazil, and was now going to plant coffee in Ceylon. He broke his journey for a day or two in Paris, and Mr. Kenyon had gone over to see him. People wondered a little to find that he had not returned; but, in Mr. Orgle's opinion, it was just as likely as not—seeing what a truly amiable gentleman he was—that he might have gone half-way on his journey with his old schoolfellow.

Whilst Mr. Sullivan and the landlord chatted, a bell was briskly rung in the upstairs room; and Mr. Gabriel despatched his note by messenger to the Lodge. The landlord, being prompted to the discovery by Mr. Sullivan, without in the least suspecting the process to which he was being subjected, artlessly confessed as much as this, and thought no harm of it.

Half an hour later, when Mr. Sullivan had finished

his meal, and had bestowed himself, with the remainder of his home-brewed ale and a digestive pipe, in the ample window-seat, he saw, as he sat smoking with a lazy relish, an elderly man move across the fields towards the inn.

'Faithful servant of the house of Kenyon,' said Mr. Sullivan to himself. 'Sent as envoy to the unpopular cousin newly returned from foreign travel. "Confidential butler," written large all over him. Ought to wear shorts and gaiters and hair-powder.'

He heard an elderly voice, evidently belonging to the elderly man, inquiring for Mr. Gabriel; and shortly afterwards steps mounted to the upper room.

'Partridge!' said Gabriel Kenyon, rising from his seat at table.

'Mr. Gabriel,' said the elderly man.

Mr. Gabriel resumed his seat, and motioned his visitor to be seated also—an invitation which was silently refused.

'Have you any message from my cousin?'

'No, Mr. Gabriel. Mr. Robert is away, sir, on the Continent.'

There was noticeable in the butler's tone and manner something very like that air of half-sullen but respectful misliking which had characterized the landlord on Mr. Gabriel's arrival.

'On the Continent!' echoed Mr. Gabriel, in a voice of surprise and disappointment. 'Has he been long away?'

'He was expected back three or four days ago, sir,' said the butler. 'He left for Paris on Monday of last week, and didn't speak of being away for more than four days at the outside. We have not heard from him since Wednesday, when he expected to be back next day, and we're growing very anxious.'

Nothing could well have been more complete than the old servant's air of respect for his employer's cousin; but, for all that, nothing could well have been more expressive of a desire to shorten the interview than the dry, reticent voice in which he answered Mr. Gabriel's questions.

'That will do, Partridge,' said Mr. Gabriel. 'You'll let him have my letter immediately upon his arrival; and, in the meantime, I'll stay here.'

'Very well, Mr. Gabriel,' said the butler, moving to the door.

'You spoke of being anxious,' said Mr. Gabriel.

The butler arrested his steps half-way, and stood with respectfully bent head, and eyes fixed upon the carpet.

'You don't suppose that there's any real ground for alarm about him, do you?'

'Why, sir,' returned Partridge, 'Mr. Kenyon has always been so regular in his ways, and so punctual to all his appointments, that we can't understand it.'

'I hope,' said Mr. Gabriel, coughing behind his hand, and casting one swift and furtive glance at the

old servant, 'I hope that Mrs. Kenyon does not share your alarms.'

The butler turned at this, and stared at him with so stricken and amazed a countenance that when Gabriel, who was surprised at his silence, turned, after a moment or two, to look at him, his own face caught the expression of the other's as instantaneously, and as truly, as though it had been reflected in a mirror.

'You don't mean to say, sir,' said the butler, 'that you don't know?'

'That I don't know?' asked Mr. Gabriel, the muscles of his clean-shaven lips twitching curiously, and his eyes staring—'that I don't know what?'

'Mrs. Kenyon, sir——' began the butler, in a hoarse voice, which broke suddenly. Mr. Gabriel stood up, and then took a seat in an armchair, threw one leg over the other, rested an elbow on the arm of the chair, and one clean-shaven cheek upon the tips of his white fingers, and was silent for perhaps half a minute. His face was ghastly.

'What were you saying of Mrs. Kenyon, Partridge?' he asked, in a voice which was intended to sound commonplace.

'Mrs. Kenyon, sir,' said Partridge, clearing his throat with a harsh dry cough, 'died four years ago.'

Mr. Gabriel, rising from his seat, lifted both hands slowly above his head, and moved them with a

horrible writhing motion in the air. He looked at the butler, and the butler looked back at him: and this time the old man's face seemed to catch and to reflect the growing horror on his companion's. Gabriel Kenyon's lips moved once or twice, and all the while the awful writhing motion of the lifted hands continued, until, suddenly, he fell full-length with a crash upon the floor; and the old servant, running to the bell-rope, pulled it down, and set the bell below-stairs ringing madly. The landlord, the landlady, the boots, and the chambermaid ran wildly upstairs in answer to this extraordinary summons; and Mr. Sullivan, who had heard, not only the wild peal of the bell, but the crash which had preceded it, ran up behind them.

The door of the room was open, and he saw his fellow-traveller by the coach extended upon the floor. He was lying flat upon his face, with his arms thrown out before him; and the old butler, with helplessness confessed in every line of him, was kneeling between the fireplace and the outstretched body, and was torturing and twisting the bell-rope with both hands. The landlady and the chambermaid flew at the prostrate man, turned him over upon his back, and began to open his waistcoat and his collar. Mr. Sullivan entered the room, and tapped boots upon the shoulder.

'You seem to be an actively built young man, boots,' said Mr. Sullivan, who was quite undisturbed

in the midst of the prevailing fear and confusion. 'You shall see how fast you can run. Go and fetch a doctor.'

Boots, glad to do anything, ran for the doctor at once. Mr. Sullivan, advancing, knelt down by the unconscious Mr. Gabriel, and felt his pulse, with a professional air. Everybody at once began to pour questions upon him; but he waved a hand to ask for silence; and by-and-by demanded brandy. The landlord hurried away, and returned, a moment later, with a bottle and a wine-glass. Sullivan applied the spirit to Mr. Gabriel's lips and temples, and, whilst thus engaged, looked up at the butler and asked what had happened.

'I gave him news,' said the butler, who was much shaken, 'of Mrs. Kenyon's death.' He spoke in answer to Sullivan's question; but he addressed the landlord.

'His cousin's wife?' said Mr. Sullivan calmly.

'His cousin's wife,' said the butler. 'I never saw a man fall in such a way in all my life. It wasn't as if he fell. He stood there, when I told him she was dead, for a minute or two, like this.' The old man raised both trembling hands in the air, and writhed them there, in imitation of the horrible gesture he had seen. 'He looked at me all the while,' he went on; 'and all of a sudden he fell full length. You'd have thought, from the way he did it, that he wanted to dive into his grave at once.'

The landlord stared aghast. The landlady, the

chambermaid, and the old butler were all trembling. Sullivan went on tranquilly moistening the lips and temples of the unconscious man. Suddenly the landlady began to whimper.

'Ah!' she said, 'it's easy enough to give anybody a bad name; but it's plain to see he had a feeling heart. I remember, years and years ago, he was in love with her. The only piece of wrong he ever did, in all his days, poor creature, was because of that. I do believe,' continued the landlady, sobbing outright by this time, 'that if he hadn't been carried away by his affections for her, he was as good a soul as ever broke bread. He's been hard thought of, and hard spoke of all about, for pretty near a dozen years; but he had a tender heart for her, it seems, after all as has been said and done.'

At this, the chambermaid, who knew nothing of the matter, began to weep for sympathy.

'What do you think of him, sir?' inquired the butler of Sullivan. 'Are you a doctor?'

'I have pursued,' said Mr. Sullivan, 'a course of pathological and chirurgical study, though I have never qualified. So far as I am prepared to speak, at present, this is no more than syncope. Syncope,' he repeated, twice or thrice, as if in demure enjoyment of the situation, and the word. 'You observe that there is a slight effusion of blood. This is due, as I perceive, to a mere laceration of the cuticle—a dental laceration. I am not prepared to assert, at present,

that there is no internal hemorrhage, but I think not —I think not. A tea-spoon, Mr. Orgle, if you please.'

The landlady ran downstairs for a tea-spoon, and returned with it. Mr. Sullivan poured neat brandy—a very little at a time—between the patient's lips. He was the only person present who was collected and self-contained in his manner; and, even more than this, the learned-sounding character of his speech served to reassure the shaken quartet of observers.

'In love with his cousin's wife, was he?' said Mr. Sullivan, moistening Mr. Gabriel's temples with brandy as he spoke, and looking upwards with a professional air. 'Did something shady for love of the lady? Ah! you'd better remove him,' he added, finding that nobody responded to these conversational overtures. 'No, no; not in a manner so rude and unscientific, Mr. Orgle, if you please. Let me have two towels.' In a minute or two the two towels were forthcoming. 'Now, slip one of them beneath his shoulders. So. The two ends under the armpits. Another beneath the knees. So. Now, one of you at each corner; and I support the unfortunate gentleman's head. Lift altogether.'

In this wise, the unconscious Mr. Gabriel was borne into the nearest bedroom. Shortly afterwards, the village doctor drove up, with boots in the dog-cart beside him, and was at once ushered into the chamber. Mr. Sullivan had succeeded in clearing the room, and was there alone with the patient.

'We have exhibited,' said Mr. Sullivan, in a professional whisper, 'a little alcohol, externally and internally. The cause of the attack appears to be attributed to shock—to mental shock. The symptoms are probably aggravated by physical shock. But your professional experience will doubtless be of greater service than the diagnosis of an amateur.'

With this Mr. Sullivan rubbed his hands, wagged his head, and smiled; whilst the doctor looked at him with an air almost of stupefaction. He examined the patient's condition for himself, administered a little more brandy, ordered and applied a cold-water compress; and then, motioning the guileless Mr. Sullivan to silence, sat down patiently by the bedside. When half an hour had passed in watchful silence, the beams of the wintry sun struck into the chamber; and the doctor, passing round the bed, and crossing the room on tip-toe, drew down the blind. At the first creak of his boots, the patient made a movement on the bed, and Mr. Sullivan remarked it. Noiselessly as the doctor tried to move, the blind made a rusty whistling as it turned; and at this the patient moved again and moaned. The doctor, warning Sullivan with an upraised forefinger, stood still, and looked and listened.

'Wasted!' said the patient, in a murmur, which, in the stillness of the room, was perfectly distinct. 'Thrown away! Such a crime for nothing!'

'Hush!' said the doctor, advancing to the bed, and

laying his hand upon the bandage which was passed about Mr. Gabriel's forehead. The patient opened his eyes, met the doctor's glance, and shivered slightly. He was quiet after this; and whether he was conscious or no, neither of his watchers could tell.

At long intervals, a faint and scarcely audible moan escaped him; and, in the course of an hour, when candles had been brought, and Mr. Sullivan had grown weary of watching the wicks grow longer and longer, he rose, and passing on tip-toe from the room, descended the stairs, assumed his hat and overcoat, lit his pipe, and strolled into the village street.

'Peltzer,' he said to himself, as he walked, 'is very much of a blackguard, but he isn't an ass, and he didn't put me upon this job for nothing. I shall find out the shortest space of time in which Mr. Gabriel can be on his legs again, and I shall go up to town in the meantime. Highly respectable old county family. Lots of tin. Seems to be worth while following. "Such a crime for nothing!" eh?'

Mr. Sullivan called at a tobacconist's in the course of his walk, and chose to be communicative. He was staying at that charming old-fashioned little hostelry the King and Constitution. Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, whose casual acquaintance he had made upon the journey, was coming down upon a visit to his cousin. Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, it appeared, had been living abroad for some years, and had had no news of the family. Learning suddenly that his cousin's wife

was dead, he had fainted at the shock, and now lay unconscious at the inn. Mr. Sullivan related everything, and even a little more than everything, he knew; and the tobacconist was devoutly interested in the narrative. But when the narrator learned that the tobacconist was but a new arrival in the village, and had been established there for no more than a year or two, he became aware that he had wasted ten minutes of his time, and immediately paying for his purchase, took a polite farewell.

V.

It sometimes happens in fiction, though the occurrence is quite unknown to the Faculty, that a strong and healthy man or woman is struck down by fever, and, without an hour's warning, lies in the wildest delirium. Gabriel Kenyon's fever did not attack him after this manner. In happened, however, that on the morning upon which Auguste Moreau was guilty of the death of an English gentleman in Paris, Gabriel Kenyon caught a severe chill. It might have been prophesied, in the case of Moreau himself, that a half-starven man, walking for hours over the snow-clad streets, leaving Paris for London wet and chilled, and wild with the remembered horror of his crime, might have discovered feverish symptoms, even if he had not seen fit to change his identity, and to receive a novel shock to his nervous system in the person of Mr. Gabriel.

The ravings of fever, as all thoughtful and instructed people know, can form no trustworthy clue either to character or to history; but it was not in the least degree remarkable that the village of Perry Haughton

should be exercised by the stories which reached it of the ghastly self-communings of Mr. Gabriel. So far as his nurses could make out his scattered and incoherent sayings, he was troubled by the presence of two people—man and woman. He would shriek against either or both of them, sometimes in broad daylight, and sometimes in the silent watches of the night. He would make wild appeals to both of them for pity and for pardon. At other times he would arraign one of his ghostly visitors with savage reproaches. But his commonest phrase, in all his mental wanderings, was, 'I did it for her sake.' Often and often he raved of a man who was not dead, but asleep; and besought imaginary bystanders, for pity's sake, to wake him, or for God's sake not to wake him, according as the fancy took him. But night or day, for hours and hours together, his tongue was never silent, and the villagers passing the King and Constitution could hear him, in a high-pitched voice as shrill as an angry woman's and as monotonous as the clack of a mill-wheel, going his customary tread-mill round of phrases.

All this time there was no news of Robert Kenyon. He had been advertised in the French and English papers by the family solicitor. Inquiries had been set on foot at Scotland Yard, but were so poorly prosecuted that nothing came of them, and when, after ten weeks, Mr. Gabriel's reluctant soul and body were dragged back from that darkness of the tomb which

both of them seemed most passionately to crave for, Mr. Gabriel found himself formally appealed to by the family lawyer aforesaid. He was asked to give his advice, as the temporary head of the house. Should his cousin Robert have finally disappeared, which seemed only too probable, for in a man of his known regularity of habit and quietude of life, so lengthy an absence and silence were only to be accounted for on the supposition of his decease—he, Mr. Gabriel, was heir to everything his cousin had owned, or nearly everything. The personalty was extremely small, and the landed estates, which were entailed, and would fall to the heir-at-law, were very considerable. In the event of cousin Robert's death, Mr. Gabriel was an extremely wealthy man. Hearing these things, Gabriel, who as yet was extremely feeble after his fever, set his thin fingers to his face and wept.

The lawyer, not knowing why a man should weep at such tidings, unless he were endowed with an extremely sensitive nature, formed a high opinion of Mr. Gabriel's heart.

'Mr. Gabriel Kenyon,' he was wont to say in later years, 'was a gentleman of the profoundest feeling—a man of the tenderest susceptibility;' and in course of time he found people who believed him. Almost the first act of the new heir-presumptive to the Kenyon lands—scarcely, as yet, the heir-presumptive, but merely temporary heir-presumptive in everybody's mind but his own—was to indite, with the lawyer's

assistance, an advertisement for the *Times* newspaper 'To Robert Kenyon, Esquire.—Your prolonged absence is a source of the gravest anxiety and disquiet to your friends. Pray communicate with them without delay.' There were other words in the advertisement, but it was only the last sentence here cited which really dwelt in Gabriel Kenyon's memory. He had a quaking, horror-stricken fear of that simple sentence; and as he lay slowly recovering from the effects of his fever in the night, those words would seem to shine upon the darkness in letters of fire. 'Pray communicate with them without delay.' It seemed to the criminal as if that invitation might be read and might be answered after some horrible and supernatural fashion. He had never thought himself a superstitious man until now, and had not accredited himself with any peculiar activity of fancy; but under the stimulus of his own crime he became endowed with the superstitions of a savage, and, after a fashion, with the imagination of a poet. There was nothing, however strange, that might not happen. There was nothing in all the wild, waste chapter of accident which superstitious terror could unfold to him which might not befall him at any moment. And the thing his mind presented to him was the thing he saw. Fancies seemed to become more solid and tangible than fact. The objects he could touch by stretching out his hand were less real to him than the things he saw in his waking dreams.

Through all this he pitied himself profoundly. If he had been criminal—and he confessed as much to himself with groanings—he had been criminal for a purpose. It had always been his settled, rooted belief that his cousin's wife had loved him better than she had loved his cousin. He had been quite certain that in a little while—say, a year or two—she would have reconciled herself to the loss of one Kenyon, and have consoled herself with the other. He had promised himself, as he walked the snow-covered streets of Paris in the rags of Auguste Moreau, that he would so cherish her that she should not choose but love him and be happy. Such a reflection, at such a time, proves the man abnormal to the verge of the grotesque; but he was not the first, and will not be the last, in whom even love has developed the characteristics of monomania. The terrible nature of the shock he had received from the words of the old butler did much to convince him, as he grew stronger and found time and power to turn the matter over in his mind, that his sole hope and aim in the commission of his crime had been to secure the hand of his cousin's wife. It became quite clear to him that he had never meditated an attack upon cousin Robert's property. That had not entered—and as the days went on this truth became more and more evident to him—at all into his calculations. He saw a vengeance of Providence, an ante-dated punishment, in the death of the woman for whose sake he had consented to become

a murderer. The crime was avenged already; and since he had had no hope in its committal of benefiting himself in a coarse material sense, he felt the freer to do it now. He could take cousin Robert's rental with something approaching purity of conscience.

Of course, however grotesquely abnormal the man might be, any such actual chain of reasoning as this would have been beyond his power to forge, unless he had been a lunatic pure and simple. He did not reason about the matter in this wise, but it was in this way that he felt about it. He had not sinned for the money. The money came as a mere incidental result of his crime. It might, therefore, be taken; but, evidently, could only be taken on the one condition, that it should be well and wisely expended. Upon this Mr. Gabriel's conscience insisted. Since the original owner of all this wealth had been generously large-hearted and large-handed, his successor owed it to his own conscience to outdo him in benevolence.

Gabriel hated children, and, therefore, heard with all the satisfaction of a self-punishing martyr that a child was chargeable to the estate, and dependent upon him for guardianship. Whatever disagreeable event might happen in connection with this property, provided that it should not be too forcibly unpleasant, bade fair to be a God-send to Gabriel Kenyon's conscience. He was resolved already in all things to make atonement. He would accept whatever evil chances befell him humbly, as the natural outcome of

his crime. There were moments when he was surprised to discover within himself a sentiment almost of saintly resignation—a something of a pious bending to the will of Heaven—which soothed like balm of Gilead.

It was in this frame of mind—which would be much more amazing to contemplate if it were more uncommon than it is—that, when he grew a little stronger, he proposed to himself, and later to the lawyer, to go to Paris, and there to make personal inquiries after his missing cousin. For four months no news of Robert Kenyon had been heard. Mr. Gabriel had been well enough provided with funds to defray the expenses of his residence at the King and Constitution, and to pay both the village doctor and his more learned confrère of the county town. He had still enough money to make the necessary journey to Paris without drawing upon the solicitor. People's opinion with regard to him had undergone a considerable change. That susceptibility of heart which had enabled him so long and so tenderly to cherish a hopeless passion that, after more than half a score of years, he had sickened into a terrible fever at the mere news of the loved one's death; that still tenderer susceptibility which so often drew tears from his eyes at the mention of his missing cousin, began to endear him to all hearts. It was known that his father had cut him off with a shilling, in consequence of some real or supposed infamy of his youth. It was known

also, in Perry Haughton as elsewhere, that fathers do sometimes disinherit their children on slight provocation; and, apart from this, it may be assumed, perhaps, that the heir-presumptive to the Kenyon lands was likely to be a less dreadful personage in the popular estimation than the disgraced exile from home—who might have enlisted; or have forged a cheque; or run away to sea; or gone to the dogs by any one of countless roads. Whatever Gabriel Kenyon might have been in the past—and when people came to talk about it, with these late new lights upon his character, nobody remembered anything altogether dreadful—he was likely now to be eminently respectable. His brother had been Justice of the Peace, had been Sheriff: had fulfilled well and worthily all the functions, public and private, of a country gentleman of the highest standing. It was not unnatural that Mr. Gabriel, as heir-presumptive to the Kenyon estates, should be also heir-presumptive to some of his late cousin's dignities, and he was already half invested with them in the public mind of Perry Haughton.

It was in the first week of May, when the birds were singing and the spring green was waving and the spring sun shining gaily, that Gabriel Kenyon set out on his journey to Paris. He paused in London and visited Scotland Yard, bearing with him a letter of introduction from the family lawyer to an inspector of the detective force who happened to be personally known to him. The inspector was prayed to do what

he could to make Mr. Gabriel Kenyon's path of inquiry smooth in Paris; and, in his turn, he gave to the grieving searcher after his lost cousin a letter to a friend in the detective force of the French capital. Gabriel was armed with all the photographs of Robert Kenyon he could find, and he went with less misgiving than might well be fancied into the lair of the lion. He saw the Prefect of Police himself, and it was that high functionary who first recognised Robert Kenyon from the photographs Mr. Gabriel displayed to him. Other officials of less importance admitted their identity later on. The matter grew to be beyond a doubt. Robert Kenyon had been found dead in a certain blackguard house in a blackguard quartier of Paris, nobody quite knew how long after his decease, but, as medical men supposed, some ten days later. The body had been exhibited at the Morgue, and had not been identified. The post-mortem examination had revealed nothing which to the mind of the surgeon sufficiently accounted for death: a contusion on the forehead, another contusion on the occiput, the slightest effusion of blood—signs of violence which were actually trivial. The dead unknown had been buried in the customary way at the public cost.

Nobody in Paris identified or dreamed of identifying Mr. Gabriel Kenyon with Auguste Moreau. The late Robert Kenyon's remains were carried to England, and were buried in the churchyard at home. Mr. Gabriel erected above them a magnificent monument of white

marble, and settled down in apparent tranquillity at the Lodge. To his own mind, for a long time, he was like a splash of scarlet in a snow-covered country, and could scarcely understand how it was that people did not know him for a criminal. But as time went on he grew accustomed to himself and his surroundings. That Parisian melodrama began to dwell almost as little in his recollection as if he had seen it acted on the stage. He became unaffectedly pious after his fashion, did many deeds of benevolence, somewhat against his will, but as an apology to conscience; and, though never very warmly liked, except by one or two, became universally respected. Either to his own mind the surrounding human landscape lost the snowy whiteness of its innocence, or the vivid scarlet of his own soul faded gradually into neutral tone. Perhaps, as he got to know his neighbours well, and grew reconciled to himself and to the past, both these operations went on simultaneously. In a dozen years he had not only forgiven his crime, but had practically forgotten it, and was ready to make the widest allowance for a man who had suffered and been tempted. And whether this condition of mind stamps him as a scoundrel of the more hopeless sort or not is a problem into which we need not pause at present to inquire.

VI.

'Let's have a look at it,' said the Major, 'I'm not much of a dab at letters myself: but two heads are better than one, and we may find out what's the matter with it. What's it all about, to begin with?'

'Oh,' said the Major's companion, with a half-disdainful, half-apologetic growl, 'it's a yarn.'

'Chuck it over,' said the Major. 'Let's have a look at it.'

His companion hurled a bulky package of manuscript at him. The Major caught it dexterously; opened it without comment, as if this violent way of handling things were commonplace in his experience; and began to read aloud.

'The Strand is the rendezvous of the unsuccessful of all grades in London—the intellectual and social Rag-fair of the metropolis. Its stony flags are beaten daily by many thousands of hopeless feet; it is the saddest, the gayest, the richest, the poorest, of London thoroughfares: the avenue of fame to the happy few; the vestibule of the great temple of forgetfulness to many more. Of what hopes and despairs, what tri-

umphs and failures, unknown ambitions, wild aspirings, vain regrets, its stones are eloquent to those who tread them. Here, with head erect, and smiling eyes, walks Success, the envy and admiration of the crowd whose name is Failure. He emerged from their ranks only the other day, and may fall into their company again to-morrow. The test of Opportunity touched him, in this crowded street, and found him of the pure metal, or, at least, so well plated that he needs the searching acid of Success to prove him pinchbeck. The unsuccessful mark him as he goes; and to some his fame is a cordial, and to others a poison.'

The Major read with an accent so tragic, and an interpretation so gratuitously vile, that the author hissed him, and, laying violent hands upon him, dragged him and the manuscript apart.

'It's bad enough, Heaven knows,' said he; 'but it's not a thousandth part as bad as you make it.'

'I don't know,' said the Major, assuming a critical air; 'it seems to be the very kind of tommy rot one sees in print, as a general rule. I think you do it very like the rest of 'em, Dick; and, upon my word, it seems to me to be a great injustice that you shouldn't be printed.'

The Major, in aspect, mingled the cherubic and the military. He was a man of tenderly-rounded outline, like an unusually well-grown baby. The upper part of his bald forehead was milky white. Below, beginning at the line clearly defined by the fit of his forage-cap, his skin was of a rich brown. His nose wore a warmer

tint, and his expression was benevolently militant. But for his moustache, which was of uncommon proportions, and his eye-glass, he would have looked altogether mild and unassuming. His manner was languid, and he spoke with a drawl which had been fashionable in his youth, but was a little out of date in these days. He was wonderfully shabby, and obviously a gentleman.

His companion was a young fellow of some five-and-twenty, with a face of honesty, candour, pluck, and good temper. He was, if anything, a trifle shabbier than the Major, and just as obviously a gentleman.

The room they occupied was at the top of a house in Great Russell Street. The uncurtained windows were grimy with years of fog and rain and London smoke, and there was no piece of furniture in the room which had not been to the wars, and come home wounded. It was nipping weather, in early spring, but the grate was fireless.

'Major,' said the younger man, throwing himself upon a sofa, and folding his arms behind his head, 'I'm deuced hungry.'

'Do you know,' returned the Major, in his placid drawl, 'I begin to suspect something of the same kind myself. Let's talk of things to eat. What was the best dinner you ever had?'

'The last,' Dick responded promptly.

'What was it?' asked the Major.

'We shared it; but it seems so long ago.'

'I dined last year, Dick, at the Mansion House. I've dreamed of that dinner every night for a week past. I dreamed of it last night. I have a thundering good mind to go to sleep and dream of it again. It began with clear turtle.'

'Shut up!' said Dick.

'It was accompanied,' said the Major, 'by the noblest sort of liquor. There was a haunch which I shall remember to my dying day.'

'Pooh!' said Dick. 'I've dined at the Mansion House myself. I've eaten many a better dinner than I got there.'

'Let us enjoy the details,' said the Major. 'Let us sit down and write an ideal menu. Now, soup is all-important. The choice is large and varied. It is not a mere question of thick or clear, to be dismissed after a moment's hesitation with a monosyllable. It would be no dearer, Dick,' he added in a tone of appeal. 'Let us make it turtle. Let us have it clear.'

'Look here, Major,' said his companion, rising, 'you must have mercy on the weaker vessel. You have starved in many climes. You are inured to want and privation, and have grown fat upon them. If you can find out any war-toughened fellow-campaigner who is as hungry as I am, you are welcome to torment him with that kind of dream; but don't tempt a neophyte too far. I have dreamed of having cold Major on the sideboard, and I may yield to the temptation offered by that too-enticing vision.'

'I was deuced hungry once,' said the Major, 'at Kurrachee. There were only twelve of us, and we were shut up by a yelling mob of three or four thousand. They were too cowardly to come at us, and we hadn't the pluck to go at them, and so we starved, whilst they revelled on rice outside. We had eight days of it, and then Billy Lansdowne came up and fetched us out of it. We had a feed that night, and I felt like a boa-constrictor.'

'Let's talk of something else, Major. What o'clock is it?'

'It's too dark to see,' responded the Major, polishing one of the dirty panes with his elbow, and striving to look out upon the street. 'They have not illuminated the clock yet. I should say it's half-past five.'

'Are you quite sure, Major,' asked the occupant of the chair, 'that there's not a little scrap of tobacco in the ship?'

'Am I sure,' said the Major, in sole response, 'that I haven't a floating thousand or two at Drummond's?'

'Major,' said the youngster, after a dreary pause, 'I shall go to sleep.'

'Best thing for you,' said the Major cheerfully.

Then for a while there was silence. The room grew darker and darker. 'Two days without grub or baccy!' said the young man on the couch. 'How long is it going to last? How long will it take to finish off two tolerably strong and healthy men?'

'Don't know,' said the Major, in his placid drawl; 'can't guess.'

'We shall know,' said Dick, 'if this kind of thing goes on much longer.'

'Looks like it,' said the Major calmly; 'but I don't particularly want to know. I'd as soon some other fellow found it out and told me.'

'If,' said Richard Douglas, still speaking from his sofa, 'if I were a poor young man of fiction there would be a chance for me; but I am a poor young man of fact, and there is none. In fiction, a poor young man would be wondering, as I am, as to what the end of it all might be. He would give up the unprofitable problem and seek consolation in his last remaining scrap of property, his violin, the faithful sharer of his darkest day. A musical impresario, wandering in the street beneath, would hear the dulcet strain, would break in upon him, and offer him an engagement which would bring him a fabulous salary and European renown. But I haven't got a violin, and I couldn't play it if I had it.'

The Major said nothing.

'Another way, as the cookery-book says,' pursued Dick. 'I should wander out despairingly, but resolved to liquidate my affairs in the Thames. Arrived at Waterloo Bridge, I should discover a damsel of surpassing beauty bent on the same errand. I should dissuade her from the rash act, consent to live for her sake, and marry her. We should live a life of humble

but contented labour, until she was discovered to be the long-lost and only child of a millionnaire, who should conveniently die at his excess of joy at her recovery, and leave us all his tin.'

Still the Major said nothing. Perhaps his young companion's attempt to be gay and courageous, and bright and high-spirited, depressed him in the circumstances. The silence lasted so long that at last Dick fulfilled his threat, and went to sleep. The Major, rising on tiptoe, walked stealthily into the next room, and came back with a counterpane, which he wrapped about the figure of his friend. The gas-lamps glittered brightly in the street below, and the Major stared at them somewhat vacantly through the dirty window-pane.

He had met this grim spectre of Poverty before, and knew him and despised him. He had been poor in many places. He had lived in Paris on a daily ration of radishes and petits-pains; in Berlin on his butter-brod and glass of lager; and in other cities, where upon occasion even these modest cates were not forthcoming —as here, and now, in London. He had munched his granitic biscuit and drunk his muddy water on the battle-field, with dead friends and comrades lying round him, and the lines of the enemy's camp-fires ringing the bases of the frozen hills. He had had his days of prosperity, too. He had started life at seventeen with a commission in a cavalry regiment, and a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, the skirts of which

had vanished from human knowledge before he had attained his majority. He had exchanged for active service abroad, and lived contentedly on his pay, winning golden opinions from his men, until the death of a relative had put him in possession of a second fortune, which had gone like its predecessor, its last shilling spent as gaily as the first.

His whole life had been spent alternately in Sparta and in Capua; and he took the rough and the smooth with an unfailing tranquil philosophy which no reverse of fortune could long ruffle or disturb. He was a man of many and varied accomplishments; but, unfortunately, these were not of a marketable sort. He was the equal of any man in England at ordering a dinner, composing a salad, or brewing a bowl of punch. In his wanderings about London, he talked with the tarbooshed Turk or turbaned Hindoo, and even surprised the almond-eyed wanderer from far Cathay with discourse in the wooden clack of his own tongue. His favourite promenade was Soho, and he was beloved of the French blanchisseuses because of the sweetness and purity of his argot.

His expectations from remaining relatives were large, but vague.

He was a loyal and lovable fellow, who had done much good to many people in his time, and harm to nobody; but he was one of those who can only sail straight when under orders, and the Major's craft was perpetually in danger of shipwreck, because he carried

no feminine captain aboard. A good wife would have been the making of him. But, unfortunately for himself, he was one of Nature's bachelors. He was of a temperament so hopeful that the future was always bright, however grim the present might be; and it was characteristic of him that he pitied his companion, whilst his own condition seemed to him to have a touch of comedy, and even of farce, in it.

The room was altogether dark when, after a preliminary roll and tumble, Douglas woke, and, becoming aware of his chum's presence by some unnameable sixth sense—for it was too dark to see by this time—demanded:

'That you, Major?'

'Yes.'

'Been out?'

'No.'

'This is getting serious,' said the younger man. 'What's to be done?'

'There's one expedient,' said the Major, 'which may be tried to-morrow. Up till now, when we have felt ourselves in want of exercise, we have taken our walks abroad together. That fact has appeared to necessitate the possession of two coats. For people in our position, the ownership of two coats is an extravagance which ought to be cut down. We must part with one of them.'

Douglas laughed, in answer, rather dolefully, and went stumbling about the dark room in search of his hat.

'Let's take our final promenade together now, Major,' he said. 'For my own part, I shall feel brighter in the streets than I do here.'

'Step lightly as you go downstairs,' replied the Major. 'Mrs. M'Echran is inclined to be tempestuous.'

They stole downstairs in terror-stricken silence. The only living thing that had ever frightened the Major was a landlady in poor lodgings. They came into the gas-lit streets in safety, and strolled along side-by-side, listlessly enough for a while.

'I begin to repent,' said Dick, more for the sake of saying something than because anything seemed very much worth saying, 'I begin to repent the vote of that last twopence for tobacco. 'It's all gone; and a loaf would have done us much more good. It's a mysterious arrangement;' he added, 'that a man's appetite should go on increasing just the same whether he has anything to eat or not. Appetite ought to be proportioned to income.'

'In which case we should have no appetite at all.'

'I shouldn't mind; I could do very well without mine just now.'

'When a man's hard up,' said the Major, 'he thinks of his nearest and dearest; when he's well-to-do they think of him.'

'I have no nearest and dearest,' said Douglas. 'With the exception of an uncle who went to the Cape years ago, I don't believe I have a relative.'

'People get rich at the Cape,' said the Major, adding

reflectively—'sometimes. I didn't; I got two fevers and a bullet. Perhaps your uncle had better luck; you'd better write to him.'

'He may be dead for all I know,' said Douglas; 'and if he's not he wouldn't be of much use to me, I'm afraid. I remember that on my fourteenth birthday I was tipped, and my uncle was the only non-subscriber in the family circle. I reminded him of this fact, and he punched my head.'

'Years may have softened him,' said the Major. By-and-by he added, 'You're a good fellow, Dick, and I shall make a man of you. You're young, and you've been spoiled by too much luck; but you'll be cured of all that, if we have half the time I think we're going to have.'

They had crossed the sullen adverse tides of traffic which roll down Oxford Street and Holborn, and had passed through High Street, and along Endell Street, where the mean shops were nearly all closed, though here and there a yet unshuttered window chequered the wet pavement with a square patch of light. There was nobody in the purlieus of Covent Garden when they came to it, except an occasional policeman, and those mysterious purposeless loungers who seem to pass their whole existence at its corners in waiting for the job that never comes. The façade of the Lyceum was ablaze with light, and the lines of Waterloo Bridge stood out clear against the opposing darkness of the night in lines of flickering fire.

There was light, and life, and motion in the Strand, towards which their feet had naturally tended. Presently, the young man took fire at it, and began to talk.

'This,' said he, 'is the nursery and the sepulchre of Hope, the fatherland of parvenus, the foster-mother of Genius.'

'That,' said the Major, 'is a fragment of the rejected scrip.'

'I never come here,' answered Douglas, 'but the street gets hold of me. There's not a note in all the infinite gamut of human emotion which is soundless here. One of these days some Shakespeare-Wagner will get an epic opera out of it.'

'The style,' said the Major, 'is more conversational and less strained; but this, again, is a modified excerpt from the rejected scrip.'

The young man walked on, dreaming with his eyes open, with a vague consciousness of power swelling within him. All avenues seemed closed—even the road which led to the necessary daily loaf. He was hungry and shabby, and yet he began so to dream of an open road, found somewhere, or forced open somehow, which should lead to fame and fortune, that he trod the pavement like a conqueror. The Major's arm, passed through his, guided him hither and thither, or arrested him here and there. The elder man was, by nature and experience, more phlegmatic; but he saw into his friend's mood, and was half mournfully amused by it.

He stopped now and then, as men in his position will. You may see the broken, hungry, valiant gentleman at any hour of any day in London, looking at unattainable things to eat, reading from the top line to the bottom the announcements of plays he cannot hope to see; inspecting jewellery he cannot hope to buy; filling his pockets with fairy bank-notes which are only valuable at the Exchange of Fancy, and will pay for Barmecide dinners only.

Douglas walked on in his cloudland, and, by-and-by, when they had cleared the roaring Strand, passed Trafalgar Square, and got into the quiet of Whitehall, he began to murmur to himself, after a fashion the Major knew of old. The phlegmatic, sweet-tempered campaigner grinned to himself as Dick mouthed his verses under his breath, and stopped or went on by fits and starts, unconscious of the guiding arm which led him.

This mood failed the youngster after awhile, and by the time the Major had guided him into St. James's Park he was once more despondent. They lingered here for an hour or two, and then retraced their steps. When they got back into the neighbourhood of the theatres, the crowd upon the pavement thickened, and the hoarse roar which swells the voice of the Strand to more than its mid-day volume told that the play-houses were emptying. They jostled their way through the noisy and good-humoured crowd, until they reached the entrance to the Gaiety Theatre, and there stopped

perforce, wedged into the front row of the mob of touts and loungers who watched the audience stream out upon the pavement and disperse. Pretty women, still prettier with the afterlight of laughter on their faces, tripped past under the escort of enviable young men, got up for conquest.

Douglas stood and glowered at it all, not unnaturally perhaps. He felt himself lost in the shabby, undistinguished crowd, and envied those who had music and laughter and the society of beautiful and accomplished women. He had had them all, and lost them, by no fault of his own, and it was pardonable in the lad that he should be a little bitter over it. He might never reach them again, or (with a flash of the mood which had taken hold of him two or three hours earlier), he *might* grasp them again—all he had lost, and more. Then came despondency anew. Years of solitude and labour would leave him with chilled blood and blunted appetite; envied, perhaps, by the young, whose very envy would be enviable to him. And even this was a dream unlikely of fulfilment.

His mournful meditations met a sudden momentary check. From under the portal of the theatre came a child-woman of eighteen or so. He had never thought himself particularly impressionable, but this girl's face seemed to him so beautiful that he had no sooner set eyes upon it than he forgot everything but admiration. He was not the only one in the little crowd about the theatre who was struck by this charming vision—a

fact amply evidenced by the hum of admiration which rose at its appearance. The young man was weak in matters of millinery, and had little attention to spare to the details of the lady's dress; but he had a vague impression of a cloud of diaphanous white, lit by touches here and there of brighter colour, and of the sheen and glimmer of jewels, as she passed lightly before him. She was accompanied by a tall and personable young man of the masher species—a young man with a face of vacuous good-humour, tortured for the moment from its customary expression of amiable nothingness into one of feeble ferocity by the effort he made to fix a refractory eye-glass. It was raining slightly; and the footman, who had slipped down from the carriage which awaited the lady and her escort, was impeded by the crowd. Douglas was almost within an arm's length of the carriage-door, and a single step brought its handle within his grasp. He opened the door, and drew back, suddenly abashed at himself.

Had he been dressed like a gentleman, he could have rendered a stranger so small a service without embarrassment; but he remembered his shabbiness so suddenly and so vividly that he could have been well content if the pavement beneath him had opened and let him through into subterranean London. The young man who accompanied the pretty girl had conquered the refractory eye-glass, and, without turning to look at the person who had done this small service,

he thrust a gloved thumb and forefinger into a pocket, and tossed half a crown towards him. Dick Douglas took one fiery step forward, with all the blood of all the Douglases flaming against the insult; but the Major, who had been a noted wicket-keeper in his day, caught the coin, spun it, pouched it, dragged his young companion backwards from the crowd, and crossed the highway.

'Confound his insolence!' said Douglas.

'Bless his extravagant good-nature!' said the Major. But Dick was in a great state of anger and humiliation.

The philosophic Major hustled him rapidly along, recrossed the road, dived into one of the northern by-streets, sought and found a ham-and-beef shop, then a baker's, then a tobacconist's, and marched the offended Douglas home. When nearly there, he called at a small huckster's shop, and bought a candle.

'And now,' said he, with an air of victory, 'the arrangements for the banquet are completed.'

'I'm not going to eat bread that's bought with money that was thrown at me as though I were a dog,' said the young fellow hotly.

'Ain't you?' said the Major. 'I am. It's your half-crown, Dick, or it was before I spent it; but I make no bones about quartering myself upon my friends.'

'Did you see the fellow?' Douglas asked.

'Yes,' said the Major. 'I saw him. What about him?'

'I didn't know him,' said the other, 'until he threw that confounded coin at me. I knew him then, though.'

'Oh,' said the Major. 'Who was he?'

'We were at Eton together,' answered Dick, 'and at Trinity Hall together afterwards. His name's Bagleigh—Lord Bagleigh. He's the greatest ass that Nature ever lent a skin to.'

'With the sole and solitary exception,' returned the Major, with his mouth full—for by this time they had silently evaded the landlady, and the Major was busy with the banquet—'with the solitary exception of the man who won't eat, though he's hungry, when he has grub honestly earned by the sweat of his own brow before him.'

'I hate the fellow!' said Dick moodily; 'I always did.'

'It's one of the oldest military maxims in the world, Dick,' said the Major, pausing, knife in hand above the loaf, to make the declaration more impressive, '*to* quarter one's self upon the enemy.'

There was no doubt at all about it—the Douglas blood was proud; but there was no doubt about one other matter either—the Douglas interior was deplorably empty. By-and-by, the Douglas laughed, and the Major pushed the provender across the table towards him.

'I suppose,' said Dick, 'I should be an ass not to take it, since it's here?'

To this the Major said nothing. They made a temperate feast, remembering the morrow; and then they sat down to a pipe, with the water-bottle between them, and smoked and tippled until the church clock sounded one.

VII.

Immediately below the two chambers occupied by the unprosperous Major and his companion, dwelt Mr. Cyrus Sullivan. Mr. Sullivan, though thirteen years older than when first introduced to these pages, still wore the same disarming smile of propitiatory impertinence, and betrayed his increased age only by a shining baldness, which, in rare moments of gravity, gave him an almost venerable aspect.

A surly man living in London lodgings may pass years there, and never come into communication with a man who lives below him, above him, or at his side. A retiring man, who is slow to make acquaintance, may pass an equal length of time in solitude. But Mr. Sullivan, who had lived in many houses in his time, and had quitted most of them for the same characteristic reason, had known everybody in every house he had ever dwelt in, from the garret to the basement. His character was not, in all respects, estimable; but he had his good points about him. He was always absolutely himself, for instance, and never permitted his own personal spiritual flavour to

be destroyed by the inspissation of another's moral qualities. If he had been introduced to a Duke, or a Prince of the Royal blood, he would have addressed him with just that air of propitiatory insolence which characterized his demeanour towards the slavey of the house he lived in. He appeared to be unconscious of the existence of social differences. Nobody had ever found him intolerable; many of the gentler sex, in virtue of his unconquerable impudence, had thought him quite or almost lovable. He walked in and out of the rooms of every man who dwelt in the shabby house in Great Russell Street with easy familiarity, and was no more checked than the friendly cat or poodle would have been. He chummed with a drunken tailor in the garret, and with the respectable man who kept shop on the ground-floor. Upon occasion, he would carry his pipe and glass of beer into the Arctic desert of the Major's sitting-room, and would there sip and smoke as he talked with an unfailing cheerful mendacity which both the Major and Douglas found amusing.

Douglas and the Major were at breakfast somewhere about the hour of noon. They found it economical to lie long in bed, even when they had provisions; and when they had not, it was the least unendurable method of passing away time which they had yet discovered. Neither was an idle man by nature. They had drifted into idle ways by mere stress of idleness. Having nothing to do had taught them to do nothing.

The manuscript returned to Douglas the night before still lay upon the table, half unfolded, in its brown-paper wrappings. A newspaper was spread over a portion of the table, by way of cloth, and on this was placed the remnant of last night's provisions. The two men ate gravely and slowly, as if resolved to make the meal as lengthy an affair as possible. Each alike was taciturn. The beginning of the day was, as a general thing, the most melancholy part of it. Towards evening, they became inured, as it were, to themselves; and sometimes, at night-time, could face their own desperate circumstances with a courage which had grown almost flippant in its carelessness by force of its employment throughout the day.

While they sat thus at mournful feast together, the door opened without preliminary or warning, and Mr. Sullivan, carrying a pewter-pot in one hand, and a briar-root pipe in the other, shouldered his way into the apartment, nodded, smiled, sipped his beer, and bestowed himself gingerly in a ramshackle old chair which stood for extra safety in a corner.

'Morning, Majah,' said Mr. Sullivan, with a military salute. 'Good-morning to our forensic young friend, also.'

They both said 'Good-morning,' cheerfully enough, and brightened visibly at their visitor's advent.

'There's corn in Egypt,' said the visitor, nodding towards the breakfast-table. 'Gentlemen, I'll bet you drinks round that I spot the founder of the feast.'

'You'll bet what?' asked the Major.

'I will bet you anything you choose to name,' said Mr. Sullivan, 'that I identify, at the first shot, the Peer of the Realm to whose generosity I am indebted for the spectacle which is now presented to my view.'

Dick glanced at the intruder almost savagely, but said nothing.

'The spectacle?' said the Major questioningly.

'Adversity Lightened,' responded Mr. Sullivan; 'or, The Breakfast Bestowed. Perhaps,' he added, dropping into a conversational tone, 'you didn't know the cove. He was a noble Lord. His name was Bagleigh.'

'There's a little enigma in this, Mr. Sullivan,' said the Major, with an air of gravity.

'I was present, gentlemen,' returned Mr. Sullivan, waggling his head with an indescribable air of shame and self-approval, 'at the scene. I was a witness of the polite activity, and the natural indignation of our young forensic friend.'

At this, Douglas coloured to the roots of his blonde hair and pulled at his moustache. Even the Major was disconcerted for a moment, and the bronze of his complexion was ruddier by a tone or two than ordinary.

'Scrumptious little party he had with him,' said Mr. Sullivan, noting the signs of the confusion he had created, and anxious to change the theme. 'She was

lovely as a child; and, now that she is approaching womanhood, she bids fair, in my humble judgment, to knock anything in petticoats in London.'

'She was lovely as a child, was she?' said the Major. He knew where Mr. Sullivan's conversational strength and weakness lay, and was not displeased at times to draw him into a manifestation of it.

'She was an enchanting little fairy,' said the visitor; 'a little wilful—for everybody spoiled her—but delightful. I do not think'—with an air of sincerity and conviction which persuaded his listeners that he was lying—'I do not think I ever saw so charming a child. It's thirteen years ago since I prophesied to myself that she would grow up to be one of the most beautiful women anywhere; and I ask you, gentlemen both, if she does not justify my prophecy?'

'Amply,' said the Major. 'Who is she?'

In his mood of listless vacuity, the Major would sooner have heard Mr. Sullivan romance than not.

'She is the daughter,' said the visitor lightly, 'of a dear old friend of mine, who came to a melancholy end in Paris, thirteen years last winter. He was somewhat older than myself, but we were the closest and dearest chums. Poor Bob!'

Mr. Sullivan sighed, took a pull at his pint, and then smoked for a moment or two, with an air of contemplative sadness.

The Major began to be interested and amused, because, to his mind, Mr. Sullivan was engaged, in

this moment of apparent abstraction, in concocting an apt continuation for a story so romantically begun.

'Yes?' he said encouragingly. 'What was the melancholy end he came to?'

'He disappeared mysteriously,' said Mr. Sullivan. 'He went over to Paris thirteen years ago last winter, for the express purpose of meeting an old chum, who bore the identical name of that great house of which our forensic young friend is not the least distinguished member. I allude,' he added, with an air of almost superfluous candour, 'to the name of Douglas.'

The Major laughed. He was adapting Mr. Sullivan's narrative and the manner of it to his own preconceived idea. Mr. Sullivan generally invented what he had to say, and the Major felicitated himself upon his present penetration as he watched, or supposed himself to watch, the workings of the inventor's mind.

'Dick,' he said, humouring his own fancy and Mr. Sullivan at the same time, 'isn't it odd that Sullivan should have been there last night, and should have recognised a young lady who has so romantic a history behind her?'

'Yes,' said Douglas ungraciously; 'very odd, indeed.'

He had less liking than the Major for Mr. Sullivan's society. The visitor's mendacity sometimes disgusted him. The Major was by nature a philosopher, and by experience case-hardened. If a man chose to be

a liar, he defended himself by a chronic unbelief of him, and was otherwise unmoved by the contemplation of the vice.

'Not at all odd,' said Mr. Sullivan, and continued his narrative. 'Mr. Robert Kenyon—for that was the name of the unfortunate gentleman whose career reached so melancholy a close——'

'What!' said Douglas, breaking in suddenly. 'Was that young lady Robert Kenyon's daughter?'

'The daughter of Robert Kenyon,' said Mr. Sullivan, 'and the niece of Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, of The Lodge, Perry Haughton.'

'By George!' said Douglas, staring at the Major, 'that's a strange thing, if it's true. My father was the last man in the world, so far as anybody ever knew, who saw Robert Kenyon alive.'

'Seems to be something in it,' said the Major, giving voice to his own inward sentiment. 'I thought, of course,' he added, with an explanatory air, to Sullivan, 'that you were bouncing.'

'I?' asked the visitor, with a look of injury. 'No, no, sir! You are joking! Don't make that sort of statement, even in jest. It wounds me, Major Morton. The one thing I can't endure is to be doubted. Even a pretence of it disturbs me.'

'I beg your pardon,' said the Major solemnly. 'Proceed.'

'Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, as I happen to know,' said Sullivan, with something of an air of mystery and

importance, 'was resident in Paris at the time of his cousin's death. He was there under circumstances of considerable poverty and hardship; a fact in no way discreditable to him, gentlemen.' Mr. Sullivan, as he said this, waved a courteous hand, to indicate the condition of the table, the appearance of his hosts, and the furniture of the apartment. 'The best of men,' he continued, 'have their times of adversity. I myself have not always rolled in wealth. Mr. Kenyon, as I said—the present Mr. Kenyon—was in poverty in Paris. He left Paris at about the date of his cousin's mysterious death there, for the purpose of visiting him in England. His probable idea was to solicit relief from his wealthy relative. He never had occasion to ask it. The wealthy relative had disappeared. His cousin went over to Paris and instituted a search for him. He established his identity with that of a gentleman who was found in a mean house in a low quarter of the city, stripped of all his valuables, and dead from some unknown cause. He returned to England; he inherited the estates of his late cousin, which were entailed; and he adopted, and has reared with the tenderest care and affection, the young lady whom we saw last night. Lord Bagleigh is, I understand, a suitor for her hand. He is Mr. Kenyon's nearest neighbour in the county, and is universally disrespected, because he is an ass.'

The two hosts were not greatly in the habit of discussing any question which their casual acquaintance,

Mr. Sullivan, chose to raise. By tacit consent between them, the little man was generally allowed to take his conversational way with no more encouragement than an occasional prompting from the Major; but on this occasion Douglas was interested. It was rather more probable than not that the young lady to whom Mr. Sullivan attached this history was altogether unconnected with it; but the story itself (as Douglas very well knew) was true in all its details.

'I remember something of all this,' said the Major, 'in the newspapers, about a dozen years ago.'

'It was not from the newspapers,' said Mr. Sullivan, with a manner almost stately, 'that I gained my information. Poor Bob Kenyon was my dearest friend, and I knew his cousin in his poverty. I was myself a resident in Paris at the same time with him, and was able to be of some occasional assistance to him. Now that I come to remember it, we travelled at that very time I spoke of from Paris to London together, and, by the purest chance, I happened to accompany him as far as Perry Haughton. I regret to say—though rather for his sake than my own—that our intimacy has of late years fallen into desuetude. He seemed to resent so strongly the applications I made to him for a return—or, I should prefer to say, a recognition—of the services I was long ago enabled to render him that I forsook his society.'

'How did you come to know Lord Bagleigh?' Douglas asked.

'He and my younger brother were companions at school and college,' responded Sullivan.

There were moments when the Major could not resist the temptation to entrap Mr. Sullivan, and at this statement he broke out with, 'Why, you told us yesterday that you were the sole survivor of your race, and had never had a brother.'

Mr. Sullivan was not abashed.

'I did,' he said, with a voice of melancholy. 'I have made a practice of saying so, and of trying to think so. The boy traded upon my kindness during many years, and I have been compelled to cast him off.'

He went into a long and entertaining history of this newly-invented younger brother, and interspersed it with many reminiscences of his early days in the society of Lord Bagleigh and other titled people, and at length withdrew.

'It's likely to be true enough,' said Douglas, alluding to Mr. Sullivan's identification of the young lady they had seen on the previous night. Lord Bagleigh is their nearest neighbour, as the fellow said, and she is just as likely to be Miss Kenyon as to be anybody else.'

'Scarcely,' said the Major, 'since Sullivan says she is.'

'I don't know,' returned Douglas meditatively. 'She

has a resemblance to her father, whom I can just remember. There was something in her face last night which reminded me of somebody. It came back to me with a hint of childhood, and I've been puzzling about it, more or less, ever since. The fellow's right, you may depend upon it.'

'Like enough,' said the Major; and there the conversation languished.

They passed an hour or two in dreary quiet, sometimes looking out of window at the surging crowd beneath, every man of which had business of his own, however hopeless and unprofitable, whilst they had none, and saw no way of finding any. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when, to the huge surprise of both, the slatternly servant of the house knocked at the door, and presented a letter addressed to Richard Douglas, Esquire. The envelope bore an office stamp, setting forth the name and address of a firm of solicitors in Chancery Lane.

'Some more of the poor old Governor's liabilities, I suppose,' said Douglas mournfully, as he tore the envelope open.

The Major lounged uninterestedly on the sofa, and watched his young comrade languidly, as he read. Suddenly the young man made an ejaculation, and began to caper, and to flourish the letter overhead. Then, just as suddenly, he arrested himself, and stared at the Major with a face of consternation.

'What's the matter?' asked the old campaigner.

'You won't believe it!' cried Douglas; 'you can't believe it—I can hardly believe it myself—but I am actually and positively asked by a firm of solicitors to undertake the conduct of a case which comes on for trial on the sixth of next month, and am informed that the necessary documents will be forwarded to me immediately on my acceptance of the brief. Look at it! See if it isn't true!'

He tossed the letter towards the Major, who picked it up from the floor and glanced over it.

'It looks real enough,' he said.

'What on earth am I to do?' Douglas demanded, with a rueful grin. 'I haven't a suit of clothes fit to go in; even the wig and gown are up the spout together. What's to be done? And how in the name of all that's mysterious and wonderful did the people ever come to hear of me? It isn't as if I were in chambers.'

'Dick,' said the Major seriously, almost pathetically, 'you mustn't miss a chance like this. You shall have the uniform, my boy, and you shall be able to call in respectable guise upon the solicitors, if that should be necessary. Leave it all to me.'

The younger man asked for explanations, which the elder stolidly declined to give. But the Major had persuaded himself to do for his young companion's sake what he would never have done for his own, and he made a pilgrimage that evening to the West-End, where, after an interview with a certain wealthy rela-

tive, he secured a sum of ten pounds upon his note of hand, and, returning, placed the money upon the table.

'You've got your chance, my lad,' he said kindly, and a little sadly; 'take it. Whether it's a big chance or a little one doesn't matter much; it's a start, anyhow.'

On the strength of the promised brief, Dick consented to borrow the money from his friend, and next day they were both respectably habited, and breakfasted and dined decently, if frugally.

As a matter of course, Dick took the proffered brief, and studied it with great eagerness, but it brought his studies to a momentary standstill when he discovered that his client was no other than Gabriel Kenyon, of The Lodge, Perry Haughton.

VIII.

Mr. Sullivan awoke one morning about this time of year, and swore. Having performed his orisons, he arose, and proceeded to the making of his toilet. It was his forty-second birthday, and he felt vaguely sentimental; and the whistle with which he accompanied the inking of his frayed cuffs and the chalking of his soiled paper collar was full of a regretful melancholy.

Things had gone ill with him, and, so far as he could see, showed little signs of mending. He had offered his native talents, quick wits, and unfailing mendacity in many markets, and had put them to many uses; but they had availed him little. He had been a bookmaker, the secretary of a Jew financier, the sub-editor of a provincial journal, a ship's purser, a schoolmaster, an itinerant photographer, a pawnbroker's clerk, the agent-in-advance of a travelling circus, and an unqualified chemist's assistant. In each and all of these varied walks of life he had shone with a brief brilliance, and had picked up a vast amount of experience, which had, somehow, been of small use to

him. Men far less clever than himself had shot ahead of him; and he felt as melancholy, on his forty-second birthday, as it was in his nature to feel.

He took stock of his features in the little triangle of cracked looking-glass affixed to the wall, and marked the ravages which time had worked in the countenance he remembered, regretfully, to have been once upon a time so frank and smooth. He shook his head sadly at the reflection, as if he charged it with making matters worse than they really were.

'Cyrus,' he said, 'you cannot yet be falling into the sere and yellow. Forty-two is an absurd age for a man of your physique to become bald.'

He sighed, and, sitting upon the bed, examined his boots with a painful interest. They were grey, and frayed at the toes, and there were signs of approaching disunion between the battens and the soles. Every article of his limited wardrobe was marked by similar tokens of ravage and decay. On dark days they passed muster tolerably well. But the sun of early spring, which burnishes the iris of the dove and sheds such tender tints on budding leaf and flower, is a foe to the impecunious man who would fain appear respectable, and until the dawning of this lovely morning Mr. Sullivan had never guessed how nearly he approached to the apocalypse of shabbiness.

He assumed each article of attire with a shiver of reluctant resignation, and surveyed their combined effect upon his person with something approaching

despair. He shrugged his shoulders sadly, put on his hat, and, opening his bedroom door, stepped out cautiously upon the landing and listened. A distan clattering of crockery, proceeding from the basement, betrayed the whereabouts of his landlady, and, descending with mincing footsteps, he reached and opened the front door, and strolled with a gentlemanly and dégagé aspect along the street.

When he came to the corner, his face, which the successful running of the domestic blockade had wreathed with smiles, assumed an expression of profound melancholy, which deepened as he entered the door of a low-housed little shop, in whose windows were displayed a few boxes of spotty-complexion cigars and an assortment of pipes in wood and cheap meerschaum. At the receipt of custom, perched behind the counter on a tall stool, sat a stout young lady of some forty summers.

'Good-morning, Mr. Sullivan,' said the stout young lady.

Mr. Sullivan silently pressed the extended hand, and deepened his already doleful expression.

'How is Mrs. Sullivan this morning?'

He shook his head and produced a voluminous handkerchief from his pocket.

'Dear, dear, so bad as that?'

'Her last words to me this morning,' he replied, 'would have melted a heart of stone, Miss Wicks.'

He mopped his eyes, and sniffed behind the hand-

kerchief. Miss Wicks slid a coin across the counter. Mr. Sullivan conveyed it to his pocket with apparent unconsciousness, and continued:

'"Cyrus," she said, "I'm afraid that I have not been the wife to you that I should have been." "Matilda," I said, "have I ever reproached you? "Never," she said; "but I can but be conscious of my failings as the wife of such a man. "Matilda," I said——'

But here Mr. Sullivan's recollections became too harrowing, and he sobbed. Miss Wicks's hand slid an ounce of tobacco across the counter. He absorbed it, and gently pressed her fingers.

'Angel!' murmured Mr. Sullivan.

Miss Wicks blushed, and lowered her eyes, and her visitor seized the opportunity to relieve his overburdened feelings by a wink, addressed to a non-existent third person. 'Why did we meet—too late?'

The blush deepened, Miss Wicks's fingers faintly returned his pressure, and her head drooped lower under Mr. Sullivan's melancholy gaze. He dropped her hand, and, with a deep sigh, left the shop.

'Poor, dear man!' said Miss Wicks, gazing, with moistened eyes, after his retreating figure.

'Rum old girl!' said Mr. Sullivan, chinking the half-crown gaily against his latch-key. 'Cyrus, you might do worse than kill off the non-existent Mrs. Sullivan, and take on that solid reality.'

He paused, absorbed in cogitations in which Miss Wicks had no place.

'Where shall I go? There's Smith's, in Holborn. As good a chop, bread, and potatoes as are to be got for a shilling in London. But they charge an extra penny for the Worcester sauce, and they won't let you smoke. There's Piaggi's, in Greek Street. That's the crib. The garlic alone is worth double the money.'

He strode on briskly, until he reached his goal, and, pushing open a swing-door, held ajar by a leather strap, entered a long low room, containing a double range of little tables, with a central gangway leading between them to a counter at the farther end. The walls were of canvas, rudely frescoed with distemper paintings from classic fable, and the plastered ceiling bore the semblance of a crowd of dropsical Cupids sporting about a blowzy Venus. There were some score of people, principally men, of a pronouncedly foreign aspect, scattered at the various sloppy little tables of imitation marble, sipping coffee and liqueurs, smoking cigarettes, and chattering volubly, each to his own satisfaction, though little to the benefit of his neighbours, for everybody talked and nobody listened.

Nodding cheerfully in answer to the war of polyglot greetings with which he was received, the new-comer selected his table, and betook himself to a study of the fly-blown carte offered to him by an ear-ringed and moustached freebooter, girt with an apron of dubious tint, who officiated as waiter. Mr. Sullivan selected his viands with a judgment which at once secured the respect of his fellow-convives, who assailed him with

advice and criticism of the various dishes inscribed; and reserved to himself a portion of Miss Wicks's donation for ulterior purposes.

Breakfast despatched, and followed by a cup of coffee and a cigarette, Mr. Sullivan took his leave of the company, and made for the British Museum library, where he was a constant and well-known visitor. After a short search among some seldom-visited volumes on the right of the reader's entrance, he selected a tome of imposing weight, and bearing it to his seat, read and wrote for two hours with great assiduity. After re-reading and correcting his manuscript, he restored the volume to its shelf, and quitting the museum, walked in the direction of the Strand. He entered a tall and narrow house in the neighbourhood of St. Clement Danes, and mounted endless flights of stairs until he came upon a door bearing the inscription '*The Cherubim*, Published Weekly, Price 1d.' His knock was answered by a voice bidding him to enter, and obeying, he found himself in the presence of a tall man seated at a desk, and writing as if for dear life. He did not look up on Mr. Sullivan's entrance, but drove his pen across the paper at a furious rate.

'How beautiful is editorial industry!' said Sullivan.

The editor of *The Cherubim* looked up, and recognised his visitor.

'Oh, it's you!' he said. He flung his pen upon the desk, and, leaning back upon his chair, elevated his

heels upon it with an air of laziness which seemed more natural to him than the severely business aspect he had worn on Sullivan's entrance.

His linen was snowy white; his garments of black broad-cloth, new and glossy; his hat shone like the helmet of Navarre; his patent leather shoes might have served for mirrors. 'I thought you were the Bishop.'

'I wish I were the Bishop,' said Mr. Sullivan. 'It's a berth that would suit me very well, and I should look the part as well as some of 'em.'

'What am I to do for you?' asked the editor.

'A little contribution,' said Mr. Sullivan, producing his manuscript.

'Your little contributions have not given satisfaction of late,' returned the editor. 'You don't seem to have caught our tone. Levity is not a desirable ingredient in an Evangelical paper; and we object to quotations from Byron.'

'It was only "Childe Harold,"' pleaded Mr. Sullivan.

'A profane poem, sir,' said the editor severely. 'His Lordship objected strongly.'

He took the MS., and twisted the leaves, reading a sentence here and there. 'No Byron here, I hope?'

'Not a line,' said Sullivan. 'Two quotations from Dr. Watts, and one from Keble.'

'That's better. How much does it make?'

'Five columns.'

'Call it three,' said the editor. 'Of course, you want payment in advance?'

Mr. Sullivan smiled, in mingled deprecation and anticipation. The editor produced thirty shillings from a cash-box, and threw them across the desk towards him.

The mere touch of the coins worked a remarkable change in their recipient. His back straightened, the red in his nose deepened, his very clothes looked six months younger, as the coins jingled into his pocket to join the remnant of Miss Wicks's half-crown.

'There's a place not far from here,' said Mr. Sullivan, 'where they sell things to drink.'

'Not this morning, thank you,' replied the editor, rapidly construing his contributor's oblique invitation. 'I expect the Bishop.'

The editorial example failed to encourage Mr. Sullivan to a like sobriety. He spent the day in wandering from tavern to tavern, and in the evening repaired anew to Piaggi's restaurant. Save for a *partie carrée* of grimy exiles playing dominoes at the further extremity of the room, the place was empty as he took his seat. A dish of watery soup was the first item of his repast, and whilst imbibing it he trifled with the carte, stimulating appetite by perusing the whole list of dishes, and weighing their respective merits one against the other. A slice of salami, highly flavoured, and of appetizing properties, though of doubtful composition, followed the soup, and was duly

succeeded by a dish of spaghetti, a preparation of macaroni flavoured with tomato, in great demand among the Italians of the quarter as a cheap and nutritious article of diet.

He completed his beatitude by ordering a cup of coffee and brandy and a cigar; and, leaning back in his seat, he sipped and smoked with the calm of a man who has dined, and is impervious to fate. He grew so drowsy with contentment that presently he began to nod. And then a singular thing happened. He was in the waiting-room of the Station du Nord Paris, on a bitter frosty morning, and Gustave Peltzer's hand was on his shoulder, and Gustave Peltzer's voice was in his ears.

'There is money enough to pay you.'

He heard the words distinctly, and they startled him so that he awoke. He had made that dream journey from London to Paris in pretty quick time, for the cigar between his lips was still alight. He took a sip at his laced coffee, to pull himself together, and in the act of doing so perceived a customer who had entered during his doze, and taken a seat opposite to him.

The day was dying fast outside, and the restaurant was thick with shadow, save at the upper end, where the domino-players had lit the jet of gas above them; and all that Sullivan could see of his neighbour was that he was an elderly man, with a ragged grey beard, and that he sat in an attitude of great weariness, his

elbows on the table, and his head supported in his hands.

'Garçon!' cried the new-comer, and Sullivan started with a surprise so strong it thrilled him with an actual spasm of pain.

'Peltzer!' he said, aloud.

The man opposite started to his feet with a gesture of unmistakable terror, and sent his right hand into his breast. A burst of laughter from the other end of the room had half drowned Sullivan's exclamation, and none but he and the new-comer were aware of it. He crossed the room.

'Don't you know me, man?' Peltzer stood with his hand still hidden, breathing stertorously. 'It's our fate to frighten each other,' said Sullivan. 'You scared me last time we met; and now we're quits.'

The other's hand left his bosom, and gripped Sullivan's shoulder with tremulous force.

'To commence,' he said, 'do not call me by that name. Do I know you?' His eyes searched Sullivan's face. 'Yes! I know you. We have met before.' The hand tightened with a sudden grip. 'Can I speak your name?'

'Toujours Sullivan,' said Cyrus.

'You followed him—the man I pointed out?'

'Yes.'

'You know his name?'

'Yes.'

'Is he alive still?'

'I saw him less than a week ago.'

'Tell me,' said Peltzer, touching at him eagerly, 'is he well-to-do?'

'He is more than well-to-do,' said Sullivan. 'He is rich.'

Peltzer settled back into his seat with a deep breath, and smiled horribly at his old acquaintance.

'At last!' he said, 'at last! oh, at last!'

IX.

Gabriel Kenyon had reigned at Perry Haughton in growing peace and prosperity for now some thirteen years. In his inward dealings with Divine Providence, his own sentiments carried much weight with him. He had been able to palliate his own crime, to pity, to understand, to sympathize with the infatuation which had hurried him to it, to make generous allowance for all the circumstances which had seemed to push him towards it and to make it easy.

It had seemed at first, for a while, as if that act were his whole life; everything else had shrunk into so complete an insignificance beside it. In a little time it became no more than an episode, and when Gabriel Kenyon himself had come to see it thus, it was natural that Divine Providence should regard it in the same light also. For so comfortable a companion is conscience to some people, that she is ready at any moment with a new code to fit any newly-created set of circumstances.

Gabriel counted that he had been already punished. The purpose for which he had committed his crime

had never been achieved, and he had learned to accept his chastisement with humility. He had resolved to be a model landlord, and to do a great deal more good with his money than Robert Kenyon would ever have done; and when he had drugged himself and hoodwinked himself for a dozen years, he was persuaded that, on the whole, he was a very good man indeed, though he admitted, with many solitary groanings of the spirit, that the criminal episode was profoundly to be regretted.

On the whole, he felt himself washed, sanctified, and regenerated. The whole thing lay in a nutshell. Conscience was the divine monitor and guide; conscience forgave him, or, at the worst, treated him only to a lenient twinge or two; and this being so, he had the most plenary right to regard himself as a criminal pardoned.

It was not unnatural that this constant habit of looking at things should breed in him a certain excess of sentimental consideration for the interests of other people, and it was not unnatural that he should mistake this spurious feeling for the real one. He stood surprised at times in the contemplation of his own delicacy and tenderness of feeling. He was so rich that it was cheap and easy to give away money. He was much in debt to Divine Providence, and, in his secret soul, so much afraid of it, that it cost him little to sacrifice now and again a spite, or even, now and again, a passion. And so he grew up to be a model

person, and was greatly admired and respected for his many admirable spiritual qualities.

It was not possible that a man who lived with so profound a fraud at the very heart of him should conserve much that was genuine, and yet, amongst the rotten and mildewed chords of nature, there was one which yielded still a note of music.

In a way, which at first had seemed both strange and terrible to him, he had begun to love the child of the man he had dispossessed of life. If any real twinge of remorse had touched him, it was at the unconscious bidding of the child. At first she had been a constant accusing terror to him. And, in spite of all this, he had grown more and more to twine his life with hers, and to centre upon her all his hopes of peace and happiness in her future.

In the course of years, after his own monstrous manner, he construed this fact also into a token of peace and pardon.

Somehow, the child had never been brought to love him in return. She was tractable, she was amiable, she did obedience to the most gently expressed desire, she submitted placidly to the endearments he lavished upon her; but she initiated no endearments of her own, and seemed more pleased to be alone than in his society. He bore this cross of sorrow with a meek resignation, which, to his own eyes, made it more than worth while to endure it. It was well, it was just and fitting that he should suffer. He knew it, he allowed

it. Providence was just; and howsoever a man might be hurried into crime, Providence had its rights against the criminal, and would, of course, enforce them. It was right, and in the natural order of things.

He was loved, and he was chastened.

There was nothing which did not serve to confirm him in the justice of his own apprehension of the workings of that puppet Providence, whose strings he pulled so sedulously.

He was morbidly anxious—though it is hardly worth while to say so, for by this time there was hardly a normal inch left in the man anywhere—he was morbidly anxious to fulfil to the letter any indication he discovered of his cousin Robert's desire in any direction. There was a distinct clause binding him to this in that declaration of amity between himself and Providence which had been drawn up by his own conscience and signed by the puppet. And when, one day, he came upon a mass of long-forgotten papers, most of them in Robert Kenyon's handwriting, he laid them by scrupulously for careful reading, and day after day worked his way through them. He liked the task the better because it pained him.

Most of these faded, yellow, old papers were letters from Robert to his wife, and the wife seemed to have treasured every scrap of writing which came to her from the beloved hand. Little notes, written early in

their acquaintance, responding, perhaps, to an invitation to luncheon, or to a water party, or a picnic in the woods, were treasured along with a formal offer of marriage, and the passionate protestations of eternal faith which followed later. Then there were letters in view of the approaching marriage, in which the writer abused, with great heartiness, all lawyers and all men of business, for inventing such sordid things as marriage settlements. And then came the last letter before the wedding, from whose yellow and dog's-eared pages the dead man's voice seemed to speak so clear and loud that the good Gabriel, protected as he was, took fright at it, and for a while did not dare to resume his reading.

But remembering, in his shrewd anxiety to serve his own turn well, that what most hurt him was most profitable to him, he began again, and got just such an afterglow of security from his fear and anguish as one gets after one's morning tub in cold water.

There was a gap of three or four years in the letters, and then Kenyon wrote from Edinburgh, whither he had gone on business. He had met, so he wrote, his old friend and school-companion, Richard Douglas.

'You have heard me speak of him,' he said, 'a thousand times. The poor fellow has had the most desperate ill-fortune; but though he is as weak as a rat he has the courage of a bull-dog, and with the little bit he has left to him he is going out into the

West Indies, coffee-planting, with a far-away cousin of his, who seems to have had a hard fight for it, and not, so far, to have made much progress. Poor Douglas has not only lost his fortune but his wife. He has one son, a bright and pretty little fellow, whom he leaves behind. Douglas asked me to keep an eye upon the boy, and I made him a solemn promise that, in case he should come to grief, the child should be looked to.'

Now this to a man with a conscience such as was the intimate treasure of Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, was neither more nor less than a distinct charge upon him. He folded up the letters, locked them in his safe, and rang his study bell, requesting the man who answered it to summon the ancient Partridge.

Partridge, who was very bald by this time, very wrinkled, and very feeble on his pins, appeared in answer to the summons.

'Sit down, Partridge,' said Kenyon, who was delightfully considerate to everybody. The old man obeyed. 'I have been looking,' said Mr. Gabriel, posing his hands wedgelike, and speaking with his eyes upon the carpet, 'I have been looking through some family documents, in which I find mention made of an old friend of the late Mr. Kenyon—a Mr. Douglas. Did you know him, Partridge?'

'Yes, sir,' said Partridge; 'very well indeed, sir. When Mr. Kenyon disappeared, sir, that was the Mr. Douglas he went to meet in Paris.'

'I had supposed so,' said Mr. Gabriel; 'I had supposed so. Do you know if he had a son?'

'Yes, sir,' said Partridge; 'the boy was here pretty often in Mr. Robert Kenyon's time.'

'Oh!' said Mr. Gabriel. 'Oho! And do you happen to know, Partridge, if Mr. Douglas is still living?'

'Why, no, sir,' returned Partridge; 'he died out in the East Indies more than five years ago.'

'Tut, tut,' said Gabriel, in a tone of commiseration. 'And the boy—do you know anything of the boy?'

'He was down here, sir,' returned Partridge, 'about five years back.'

'Down here?' said Mr. Gabriel, starting, and staring a little.

'When I say down here, sir, I mean down at the Vicarage. Him and the Vicar's son was at college together. He only stayed a day or two, and then they went off to Norway together. I believe it was while he was away there the news of his father's death came.'

'Indeed, indeed!' said Gabriel, in the same tone of tender commiseration. 'And do you happen to know, Partridge, if Mr. Douglas's affairs were flourishing?'

'Well, sir,' said Partridge, 'I never thought they was, sir; but it wasn't my place to ask, and I don't remember that I heard the subject mentioned.'

'Do you think,' asked Gabriel, 'that young Mr.

Powerscourt is likely to know young Mr. Douglas's whereabouts now?'

'Well, I should say so, sir,' said Partridge. 'They seemed to be uncommon good friends when they was here together.'

'Thank you, Partridge,' said Mr. Gabriel, with an almost humble suavity; 'thank you. That is all.'

A little later he walked into the hall, received from the hands of a polished servitor his hat and gloves and ivory-headed walking-cane, and set out for the Vicarage.

There young Mr. Powerscourt was able to tell him something of what he desired to know. Young Douglas had inherited next to nothing, had studied for the Bar, and had been called; was a very clever, bright, and capable fellow indeed, and probably had hard work to make both ends meet. Mr. Gabriel's informant had not seen his chum for a twelvemonth; but had his address, such and such a number in Great Russell Street.

'Not a very fashionable quarter,' said young Mr. Powerscourt, who had very much of a fashionable air.

'Thank you, Mr. Powerscourt,' said Gabriel, 'thank you. Perhaps the prospects of our young friend may brighten—they may brighten.'

'Well, sir, if you can do anything for him, I shall be very glad of it, for he is a right good fellow.'

'Come, come, Mr. Powerscourt,' replied Gabriel,

with a manner which bespoke benevolence in every shade of it, 'I did not give you the right to draw that inference.'

'Well now, do you know,' said the parson's son, 'I think you did.'

When they shook hands and parted, the young fellow's grasp was warm and cordial. The sense of the pressure lingered for a minute or two, and was comforting to Gabriel's heart. He approved of himself unreservedly for years past, and the verdict of others ratified his own.

He wrote at once to his solicitors in town, indicating his desire that Mr. Richard Douglas should be intrusted with the conduct of a small suit then pending—a case of little importance, and one which he could well afford to lose. As it happened, Mr. Douglas turned out to be a young man of considerable sagacity and force. He carried the case through triumphantly, and so pleased Mr. Kenyon's solicitors by his modesty and good sense and frank bearing that, by-and-by, other briefs found their way to him, and he became the envy of many dusty juniors, his seniors, who had never yet been intrusted with a brief in the course of their lives.

Two or three months later came on for hearing another suit of Gabriel Kenyon's, a case of much importance, and one which he could not well afford to lose. His lawyer, in spite of his high opinion of Mr. Douglas's talents, would fain have instructed an

older and more experienced counsel; but Mr. Kenyon, pushed thereto by the dictation of Providence, insisted, and young Mr. Douglas was retained. He conducted that case with a display of the same acumen, the same grasp, the same self-contained modesty as before, and won it. In fine, young Mr. Douglas's fortune was made if he chose to go on making it; and Mr. Gabriel Kenyon had laid another stone upon the cairn which held the troubled spirit of his cousin down.

It need hardly be said that young Mr. Douglas left his garret near the sky, and sought less elevated but more comfortable quarters elsewhere. It need hardly be said, either, that the faithful companion of his arctic exile from society, the Major, accompanied him.

Mr. Kenyon met the young barrister in court, and afterwards paid him more than one visit to his chambers. He related, with only the suppressions which seemed necessary, the manner in which he had become aware of the barrister's existence.

'And you see, Mr. Douglas,' said he, in conclusion, 'I am the sole inheritor of my cousin's wealth, or rather, I should say, the sole trustee—for what are any of us but trustees in anything?—and it seemed my duty, as it was my pleasure, and in this case my extreme good fortune, to follow out the expressions of his will. Your father and my poor cousin, Mr. Douglas, were friends. They were of a like age, and no doubt had countless interests in common. An old man like

myself can scarcely ask a young fellow like you for companionship; but I shall be glad if you will give me something of your society, and if you will let us be as friendly as we can.'

Now, Dick Douglas had not altogether liked Mr. Gabriel Kenyon, though not having as yet given himself much to the analysis of his own impressions, he had scarcely asked why he misliked him. But at this address the young fellow's heart quite melted, and he was sincerely moved. He felt a swift and sudden conviction, which shook his slight mistrust to its foundations and brought it down for good and all. He was certain, as only an enthusiastic and loyal-hearted youngster can be, that Gabriel Kenyon was a man with tender susceptibilities, great generosity of nature, and a large and lofty sense of his own personal responsibility.

He received Gabriel's approaches to friendship with an actual fervour, and he swore to the Major that night that Gabriel Kenyon was the sort of man who gave one faith at large in human nature.

Kenyon appointed a time for his visit, and at the beginning of the Long Vacation Douglas left the dusty purlieus of the Courts and his choky chambers for the free air and green landscapes of Perry Haughton.

X.

Gustave Peltzer insisted so strongly on being taken home by Mr. Sullivan, that Cyrus, who was always of rather a yielding turn of mind than otherwise, assented, albeit with much unwillingness. Even at the beginning of their acquaintance, when some one or other of Monsieur Peltzer's nefarious occupations had prospered, when he had worn something of the air of a dandy—or, at the worst, of a successful swell-mobsman—and had gone habited in clean linen, Cyrus had found his companionship scarcely desirable. But Mr. Sullivan was one of those people who take their acquaintances as they take their circumstances, with little effort to change them for the better. If Fate sent broken victuals and unsavoury companions, the broken victuals were better than none at all to him; and the companions, however unsavoury, an improvement upon solitude. He had not pith enough in him to entertain a really active dislike for anything or anybody; and so, though he demurred at first, he yielded to Monsieur Peltzer's impetuous solicitations, and took him home.

'Where have you been all this time?' Sullivan asked him that evening.

'Been?' said the other, stretching out a pair of haggard and shaking hands. 'I have been in frost, and rain, and snow. I have been in chains. I have been under the whip. I have been blistered black by abominable suns. I have been at the galleys.'

This was a little startling for Mr. Sullivan, and he liked his companion less and less. If he had an ambition, it was to seem unmoved and immovable, and at home in the presence of all men. So he made a rather ineffectual grimace, and asked, as casually as he could:

'What was it for?'

'It was a conspiracy,' said Peltzer. 'I was charged with a burglary, of which I was as innocent as the child unborn.'

'Sans doute!' said Cyrus.

'But I am not here,' Monsieur Peltzer continued, pulling hungrily at his ragged beard first with one hand and then with the other, 'I am not here to talk of that. Let us speak of the man you followed. Tell me his name. Tell me where he lives.'

'I don't see why I should,' said Mr. Sullivan thoughtfully. Peltzer's hungry hands ceased to tear at his beard, and knitted themselves together, and his face assumed an expression so unpleasing that Sullivan involuntarily drew back his chair a yard. 'Look here,' he said defensively, 'business is business. What do you want to know for?'

'If that man is still alive, he is rich.'

'Oh, he's got lots of money,' returned Sullivan.

'If,' said Peltzer, 'he is as rich as Crœsus he has not a penny in the world that he would not give to me with great willingness if he knew what I could tell him.'

'Oh!' said Sullivan, and sat silent for awhile, Peltzer darkling at him with a wicked grin, and tugging with both hands at his grey beard anew.

'What could you tell him?' he asked, after this pause.

'That is my affair,' Peltzer answered.

'M—m,' said Mr. Sullivan, lighting his pipe, and doing his best to seem at ease. 'I hope you won't think me impolite, my friend, but I do not think you are likely to be liked so much as all that.'

'Not liked?' said Peltzer. 'Very well. That is probable enough. Suppose we say feared? Tell me where he lives and what he calls himself.'

'I'll tell you what it is,' said Sullivan with an air of courage, 'and I'll tell you plainly. I went on a wild-goose chase for you years ago, spent a good deal of time and, for me, a good deal of money. I found out what you wanted. I went over to Paris to take you the news. And if there is anything to be done in the matter at all, I want to be paid for all that trouble. I shan't move another step until I know all about it Perhaps I shan't move even then. It will depend very much on whether I like the business or not.'

'Look you,' said Peltzer, 'I have been these twelve years at the galleys. I have burned under those intolerable heats. I have frozen under bitter cold. I have starved. I have been beaten. I have had a wet death at my side at any minute when I chose to take it, and I have herded with the outcasts of the world. Why do you think I have borne all this?'

'I suppose,' said Mr. Sullivan, wagging his head with his propitiatory air more strongly marked than usual, 'that you bore it all because you could not help it.'

'I could have died at almost any hour,' said Peltzer; 'and I lived with one hope. I had good reason to believe that man was rich—the best of reasons. I knew him when he was as poor as you or I, and now that he is rich I know how he became so. He will part his fortune with me when he sees me, and will do it willingly. It was the one chance of meeting you again that brought me here to starve in London. It was the chance of finding him alive and well-to-do that kept me out of that wet death I spoke of.'

Mr. Sullivan, though by no means a man of conspicuous virtue, and by no means choice in the selection of his friends, had not yet allied himself practically with the criminal classes. The force of his misliking for Monsieur Peltzer began almost to surprise him.

'What do you think his fortune may be worth?' asked Peltzer.

'I don't know,' said Sullivan. 'He may be worth ten thousand a year.'

'Ten thousand a year!' cried Peltzer, 'and you call that wealth?'

'I don't mean francs,' said Sullivan; 'but pounds sterling.'

At this the other's eyes glistened, and he rubbed the hungry hands together.

'Ah,' said he, 'a quarter of a million per annum! That's something! Divide it. Call it a hundred and twenty thousand. Not for once, not as a mere handful down, and then all over; but to be paid regularly year by year so long as he lives! Call it a hundred and twenty thousand!' he muttered to himself, after this joyous outburst. 'Call it a hundred and twenty thousand!'

'Yes,' said Cyrus tentatively, and having as yet no great faith in the realization of Peltzer's vision: 'call it sixty thousand francs a year a-piece.'

The ugly gleam of triumph on the voyou's face clouded suddenly, and for a moment he paused with both hands at his beard, and looked ferociously at Sullivan. Then he forced a smile, which was even less prepossessing than his scowl had been.

'Let us call it sixty thousand francs a year a-piece,' he answered.

Monsieur Peltzer's manner did much more than his words to awaken Mr. Sullivan's belief in him; and Cyrus argued that, had the prey been altogether

shadowy, this wild beast of the galleys would not have looked so disposed to tear the man who tried to take a half of it away from him.

'I begin to see your little game,' he said. 'You want hush-money.'

'I want hush-money,' said Peltzer, 'and I shall have it. I could hang the man.'

At this Sullivan began to quake a little, and when he had wagged his head and tried to smile by pure force of habit as he spoke, he felt the contrast between his manner and his own sensations to be something ghastly.

'There is only one thing that can hang a man,' he said. 'You know what that is.'

'Yes,' said Peltzer; 'that is what I know of this man.'

It would be hardly fair to the butterfly species to liken poor Sullivan to one of their race. He was not especially bright in colour, or remarkably innocent and harmless. But at his worst he may be likened to the caterpillar—whose one aim is to sun himself, and to bore, for the satisfaction of appetite, through as much succulent greenery as comes in his way. He had never done any man an intentional mischief in his life. With a certain free-handed, feeble, emotional good-nature, he had done good turns for scores of people. He was, in the main, a kindly and well-meaning little man; and if he lied, it was as he breathed, unconsciously, and by organic arrangement. He had bowels of compassion within him; and, though

he was at once poor and—so far as he knew how to be—luxurious, he was not hungry to get at the good things of this world by giving pain to any living thing. But the wolf frightened the caterpillar; the poor little good-for-nothing creature could make no stand against him. Peltzer showed his fangs and his claws, and how should the caterpillar keep a secret from the wolf, for whom he would not make a twentieth part of a mouthful?

'You shall have half,' snarled Peltzer. 'You shall be rich for life. You shall drink of the oil and eat of the fat for ever.'

This greasy prospect presented no great attraction to the feeble Cyrus; but he revealed the name and address of Gabriel Kenyon, Justice of the Peace, and what-not, of The Lodge, Perry Haughton; and Peltzer wrote them down.

'And now,' said Peltzer, 'I must have clothes to go in. A man in his position will not look twice at one who looks as I do. You must find me clothes.'

Cyrus began to go in fear of this terrible companion, and wished with all his soul that he had chosen that evening to dine anywhere else than at Piaggi's, or that he had not been so eager to claim an undesirable old acquaintance. But, in brief, he found that until Monsieur Peltzer's desire should be accomplished, Monsieur Peltzer was quartered upon him, and was utterly impervious to any hint on his part of desire for solitude.

Monsieur Peltzer's personal habits were of the most disagreeable kind. He ate like a famished dog, tearing his food with animal noises. When he slept he was in the habit of waking up with yells of rage or terror. When he drank, he preferred the cheapest and coarsest kind of brandy, and took a great deal more of it than was good for him. At such times he would become horribly affectionate, and would claw and paw his little comrade all over with oaths of endearment, breathing neat brandy like an alcoholised furnace. Every day he clamorously demanded money for drink, and would pay no heed to Sullivan's urging that if money were to be found to give him that impossible appearance of respectability he craved, it must be found shilling by shilling, and hoarded carefully.

At length Cyrus bestowed a whole five shillings upon this Frankenstein monster: and whilst he was abroad dissipating it in the lowest haunts of Soho, the little man packed up his few traps and flew. He regarded Monsieur Peltzer in the light of a dreadful warning, and began to reform his ways. He left many of the more objectionable of his old companions, and, in fear of meeting Peltzer, he avoided many of his old haunts. He began even to take a cursory interest in the sermons which he stole from the old divines on the shelves of the British Museum, and sold to the editor of the *Cherubim* as novelties in the way of theological dissertation.

He had so far reformed that in the course of a

month or two he was the proud possessor of no less a sum than six pounds sterling, all honestly saved out of the result of doubtfully honest labour. And so curiously do things arrive in this world, that this poor little spurt of morality on the part of the poor little caterpillar served to furnish the wolf with the sinews of war. For being one night in Oxford Street, he turned and recognised Peltzer, who hailed him with a banter so violent and threatening that, to get rid of him, Cyrus parted on the spot with two-thirds of his belongings.

Peltzer pouched the money, and disappeared, odiously radiant; and Mr. Sullivan paced the streets for an hour or two, filled with serious thoughts as to the advisability of beginning his worldly career anew as a farm labourer in New Zealand.

This encounter happened in the month of August, some two months after the date of Gabriel Kenyon's invitation to Douglas.

And now, after something of a surfeit of villainy, let us try our fortunes with youth and innocence.

XI.

Youth is always impressionable; but when a man happens not only to be young, but to have a little of the poetic faculty of imagination, he stands at double disadvantage. Perhaps at double advantage. But the answer to that problem depends entirely upon one's way of looking at things. When Douglas's knowledge of the existence of Miss Kenyon was little more than twelve hours old, he had been able to identify her as the daughter of his father's dearest friend. That a young man should have seen a young lady, that he should have been favourably impressed with her personal appearance, and that he should, within a dozen hours, have discovered her identity, were facts in themselves by no means remarkable or peculiar, and yet to Douglas they contrived to appear so.

In a world of coincidences it was hardly remarkable that he should have received a few hours later still a letter, the contents of which were obviously dictated by a relative of the lady. Most observant people have remarked that events occur in cycles more or less complete. To have heard mention of a man is the

prelude to meeting him. To have hoped a thing aloud is often the prelude to getting it, and the unexpectedness of the event seems to be its surest prophecy.

Douglas was not yet experienced enough to escape surprise. The simple events of those two days were imprinted on his memory so clearly that at any moment he had but to glance at them to behold them in all their original rotundity of form and vividness of colour.

When we grow old, or even middle-aged, we enjoy chiefly by remembrance. The light of dawn lingers in the memory, and tinges what we see later on with something of its own magic colour. A man born old would never know how to enjoy, how to wonder, how to be pleased, grieved, or astonished, or how to fall in love. It is youth who holds the master-key to the emotions, and who transfers its possession to memory when he leaves his own domain of wonder.

After the baked flags of London and the dusty purlieus of the Courts, the very greenness of the fields was an unspeakable joy. A red-roofed rustic cottage, half hidden in trees, with a little silver strip of a brook somewhere near it, brought an unutterable pleasure to the traveller's heart. A white cloud floating softly and listlessly from the blue of the summer sky touched him with a vague and tender longing which he would not have put into words for any man's hearing if he could, and could not though he

would. There were flower plots at little country stations whose odour reached him like a happy thought; farmsteads never seen before, and only caught sight of for a minute, as the train whirled by them, that were familiar and homelike to his heart. In short, he was young and happy, and in July weather, and was dreaming, more or less consciously, of a pretty girl whom he had seen but once, and was going to see again.

To the quiet and sober fancy there is something almost pathetic in the contemplation of a young man so engaged. But as adventures are to the adventurous, so are sweets to the sweet, and the thoughts of youth to the young; and the older man, who can shrug his shoulders with a half-pitying philosophy, is more to be pitied than the youth or the maid on whom his pity is bestowed.

To tell the truth, there was a ridiculously shamefaced acknowledgment in Douglas's own mind that he was going to fall in love. He resented this belief, and tried to laugh himself out of it, with no great success. To be sure, the immediate effect of his self-mockery was decisive, and it was easy to arrive at the conclusion that the feelings he experienced were altogether absurd. He was a young man of many gifts, and had not only something of that faculty of poetic imagination before cited, but had also a logical mind, which desired to proportion cause to effect and effect to cause in all things. Thus far there was evidently

no earthly reason why the young man should be guilty of the folly of falling in love. To begin with, he had seen the young lady but once, and then only for a moment. Next, he knew nothing of her character and disposition. But though he assured himself of this, he would have been readier than he guessed to fight on behalf of her fair reputation with anybody if an occasion had but offered. Then, again, he was poor even yet, though the way of success seemed to be opening out broadly and smoothly before him; and the girl was an heiress. This last fact alone would, as a matter of course, have been a stumbling-block in the way of any right-minded young fellow. So Douglas was able to persuade himself that his shamefaced mental admission was a foolishness, and yet was not able to dismiss it altogether.

Perry Haughton was no longer connected with the outer world merely by its coaching roads. It boasted in these days a railway station, and the route from town was direct and rapid. As he drew near the termination of his journey, the young fellow was conscious of an amazing nervous flutter. He was not accustomed to the loss of his self-possession, and the present rout of his sensations both surprised and annoyed him. His anger at it helped him for a while, and when he alighted from the train and found himself accosted by a middle-aged and eminently respectable groom, he was in full possession of himself again. The groom was charged to say that Mr.

Kenyon himself would have been at the station, but had been suddenly called away from home, though he would very probably have returned by the time the Lodge was reached.

The visitor's traps were got into the dog-cart, and the visitor was bowled rapidly away towards the house. And now, to his intense disgust and self-disapproval, he found his gathered forces all newly routed.

There is, probably, no condition of feeling to which men may not become more or less inured. A man habitually shy grows used to himself, and is conscious, in the midst of his most painful fit, of a certain sense of custom. But when a man habitually self-possessed grows shy, he has not even the sustaining sense of habit to console him.

The visitor was already in a state of mind almost pitiable in its nervousness when a quite terrible fancy flashed upon him. Suppose that he should be recognised as the recipient of Bagleigh's insolent bounty!

Kenyon came out into the hall to meet him, and saved him from the dreadful ordeal of encountering the lady without preparation. Gabriel's manner was worthy of the popular estimation of him. It was subdued and gentle, almost to a fault. He had always stooped a little in his walk, and now his shoulders were so posed as to express humility and deprecation. The tone of his voice seemed to say that if you chose to treat him ill, he was ready to accept you as a part

of the great universal lesson of chastisement. How, with all this gentleness and humility of his, he contrived to be so keen a hand at a bargain as he was, surprised a good many people. He seemed formed to yield, and yielded less often than might have been expected of him.

The personality of the young lady, who as yet was nameless to Douglas's mind, tinged Gabriel. He was uncle to a divinity, and, apart from this, he was the only man who had reached out a helping hand in a time of genuine trouble. That smooth and broadly opened pathway to success, which seemed to lie before the young barrister now, would have been very hard to arrive at without his helping hand. Dick shook the helping hand with great heartiness, and an almost filial reverence. No such fancies as those for which Mr. Kenyon's eyes and mouth might have been responsible under different circumstances assailed him. He saw only a gentle-mannered, sad-voiced, generous creature, who was uncle to an angel.

By-and-by came the introduction to the angel herself.

'My niece, Helen,' said Kenyon; and Dick, rising, bowed and muttered unintelligibly. When he was shown to his own room, a few minutes later, and was left alone, he could not have told whether niece Helen were or were not the girl he had seen outside the theatre.

His unreasonable perturbation ashamed him, and he

fought against it, applying to himself many unflattering epithets. He was just as stupid and as little self-possessed at luncheon, discerning only that the girl was delightfully frank and fresh and young-womanly. If he had but once been able to dispossess himself of the absurd idea that he was there expressly to fall in love, he felt that he might have acquitted himself better.

But perhaps his shyness may have been of some service to him after all. He was so evidently ill at ease that the girl had a little pity, to begin with. He did nothing gauche or actually stupid, and he was obviously a gentleman, though an unusually timid one, she thought. His want of nerve gave the girl plenty of opportunity to examine him, and of this privilege she innocently availed herself. What she saw, she liked; and the liking was none the less dangerous because it was so entirely innocent and unconscious.

There were not many young men introduced to the Lodge at Perry Haughton; and it was rather a gloomy conservatory for so fresh and bright a flower to bloom in. She had never felt it to be so. But then youth has its own resources, and makes its own sunlit atmosphere in quarters which one might suppose to be airless and sunless.

Shortly after luncheon, and just when Douglas was beginning to recover himself, the trio become a quartette. Lord Bagleigh was announced, and entered,

beaming fatuously behind his eye-glass. He recognised his old schoolfellow and college companion languidly, and having ventured to say that it was dooced warm, fell into restless silence, and glowered at the new-comer.

Douglas had been accustomed to employ his Lordship as a chopping-block, and felt so much inclined to renew the experiment now that he was only able to restrain himself by the most heroic effort. Kenyon proposed to show his guest the grounds, and for a few minutes Dick and his old schoolfellow were left alone together.

His Lordship arose, adjusted his shirt-cuffs with an air which his companion felt to be offensive, and opened the conversation.

'I say, look here,' he began, 'didn't know you knew anybody down here.'

'No?' said Douglas.

'No,' said his Lordship.

'That is your forte, you know,' said Douglas.

'What is my forte?' demanded his Lordship aggressively.

'Not knowing things,' said Douglas. 'That was always your strong point.'

His Lordship turned this over for a while, and finding no immediate response for it, sat in silence for a minute or two.

'When did you get here?' he asked, after a pause, with a manner more markedly aggressive than before.

'This morning,' said Douglas.

'Going to stay long?' Bagleigh asked him.

'Probably a month or two,' responded Douglas.

'Dooced unpleasant!' said his Lordship. 'Nice neighbourhood, and all that sort of thing.'

'You think my presence likely to detract from its charms?' asked Douglas.

'That's just where it is,' replied his Lordship, who knew how to be candid upon occasion.

'The fact is,' said the young barrister, 'that you and I don't suit each other, Bagleigh.'

'By gad, we don't!' the young nobleman answered, with conviction.

'You see,' pursued Douglas suavely, 'you are bound to see—that, having accepted an invitation to stay here, I must abide by it. I am chained here by all the laws of politeness. Now, you are not. The world is wide. The season in town is at its height. No doubt, your fascinating manners and brilliant conversation are missed in many places. You have duties elsewhere, Bagleigh.'

'Beggar gets worse,' said my Lord, as if addressing himself to some invisible third person; 'always was a deuced unpleasant fellow, and gets worse instead of better. Look here,' he added, turning round with languid inquiry, 'do you mean to stop here all the time?'

'I suppose so,' answered Douglas.

'Damn noosance!' said Bagleigh, with an air of disgusted fatigue.

'Do you mean to stay here all the time?' asked the barrister.

'Yes,' responded his Lordship; 'make a point of calling constantly.'

'Cheerful prospect!' said Douglas.

'Isn't it, by gad!' his Lordship assented.

Kenyon's return put an end to this exchange of civilities. The host was very smooth and courteous with the young nobleman; but Bagleigh, who had commonly but little to say for himself, was so wrathful at Douglas's presence that he was at more than usual disadvantage. The county at this time was getting ready for an election fight, and his Lordship was usually as keen-set as anybody to talk about the electoral chances. He did not talk or think very brilliantly, but was quite persuaded that the country would go to the dayvle unless his noble father's nominee were carried, and was patriotically anxious to escape so dreadful a consummation. To-day, however, though Kenyon had a great deal of more or less important news to give him, Bagleigh's interest was divided, and at times he answered altogether at random.

Kenyon's political talk detained him, and he was compelled to see the new arrival place himself at Miss Kenyon's side without making even the feeblest effort to frustrate him. Kenyon was talking away with a certain smooth mixture of deference and dogmatism, when his Lordship cut the thread of his speech

abruptly by asking him if he had known that fellow long.

'His father and my poor cousin,' said Gabriel—he always spoke of his poor cousin when he wished to indicate Robert Kenyon—'were close companions nearly all their lives. Mr. Douglas and I have not been long known to each other personally, but I have formed a high opinion of him—a very high opinion.'

His Lordship grunted, and said nothing more upon this topic; and Gabriel went on with his political dissertation.

In the meantime, Douglas was fast settling into himself again. His little brush with his Lordship had done wonders for him. And now he was no longer intimately concerned with his own sensations, he began to think his present circumstances charming. The weather was heavenly—an ideal English summer day; the landscape was delightful; and, since the foolish fancies of the morning had departed, his companion was perfection. The young man thought he had never seen so sweet and artless a simplicity and candour as she displayed. And it is quite likely that he was right; for, though good and charming girls are fortunately by no means as rare as diamonds, though infinitely more valuable, he had not encountered many since he had come to be of an age to appreciate their value.

She was neither over shy nor over frank, but mingled a delightful candour with a reticence equally

delightful to the young man's mind. She had very fine expressive grey eyes, and a way of using them which a coquette would have envied, and have envied in vain, because, with this young person, these allures were natural, and no more to be helped than breathing. They expressed everything she thought, and perhaps, since her companion was the older, the stronger, and the more experienced of the two, they may have expressed even more than she thought. For a young man in love translates quite naturally into the mind of a girl his own best and subtlest fancies. In such case the girl's province is unconsciously to inspire the fancies, and the young man's province is to believe that the fancies are consciously inspired. Douglas had no more ridiculous notions about falling in love. He and the girl were almost intimate in an hour or two; and the idea of falling in love was a thousand miles away from him, because he had actually begun to do it.

XII.

THERE was not much pride about the Major, and when the wealthy relative of whom he borrowed for Douglas's sake proposed to supply him with an income of a hundred pounds per annum until such time as the Major's next expected ship should come in, he took the not too magnificent allowance comfortably and with no self-upbraidings.

He stayed in Douglas's chambers, and led his own queer life with perfect satisfaction. If he had been a novelist or an artist his knowledge of the Soho quarter might have been invaluable to him; but he was a man who found no uses for anything, and was quite contented to enjoy his own discoveries without imparting them in any other form to other people.

There was a certain burly, black-eyed, red-cheeked Parisienne, in the Major's favourite district, who regarded him with mingled veneration and affection. She was by profession a washerwoman, and, by gift of Nature and dint of practice, a perfect mistress of the great art of slang. In Paris, among her sisters, she had been known, admired, and dreaded; but trans-

ported to London, and compelled there to wield a foreign language, she had found her native deftness and long practice of small avail to her. The Major had one day dropped in at her establishment to inquire after some missing articles of linen. Finding her but poorly acquainted with English he had made his demands in her own tongue, and in half an hour the two were comrades. The blanchisseuse had found her master; but the Major had found an opponent worthy of his steel, and in each other's society the pair were happy.

From that day forward the Major was in the habit of calling upon Madame Dammery and chatting over the events of the day.

Madame Dammery passed her working hours in the front shop, engaged in the task of ironing. On wintry days, when there happened to be no coals at home, the amiable warrior had found the front shop no unpleasant calling-place. He would sit at ease upon a table, dangling his short legs, smoking and rolling cigarettes—if the Fates were so propitious as to afford him tobacco—and Madame Dammery, clad in spotless print, spotless white apron, spotless white stockings, and spotless white cap, would chaff him in delicious argot as she plied her smoothing-iron. The Major would listen smiling, and, when his turn came, would respond with a volubility and raciness which surpassed the good woman's own.

All the spotlessly attired laundresses of the establish-

ment loved and revered the Major. There was not a woman of them who would not have done his clear-starching for nothing.

In hot weather the attractions of the blanchisserie were less pronounced than in cold; but the Major's native sense of courtesy compelled him to make his visits no rarer in summer than in winter.

He called upon a certain broiling August day, took his seat upon the customary table, lit his customary cigarette, and sat for some ten minutes as a target. He was preparing to become marksman in his turn, when the arrival of a client checked him for a moment.

No sooner had the client spoken than the Major turned his head towards him, and skipped lightly from the table. The new-comer turned also, and revealed the familiar features of Mr. Cyrus Sullivan. His face, which was clouded by an unusual look of worry and sadness, cleared for a moment as he shook hands, but the cloud came back again. There was no reason why Mr. Sullivan's presence should interfere with the amusements of the hour, and the Major, taking advantage of the pause occasioned by his entrance, discharged his gathered shafts of repartee. The ironing-women shrieked in chorus, and Mr. Sullivan offered a tributary smile, which faded as quickly as its forerunner. Even in the midst of the preoccupation caused by the sallies of the blanchisseuse, and the necessity for responding to them, the Major noticed that Sullivan was unlike the Sullivan of old

days. The odd mixture of insolence and appeal for consideration which had been used to characterise him had altogether disappeared, and in its place was an air of settled sadness and something which looked like bewilderment.

Cyrus, when he had deposited the little parcel of linen he had brought with him, still lingered—a skeleton at the feast of slang. The Major could see no other reason for his sadness than that afforded by impecuniosity. But Sullivan, with a manner plainly mechanical, began to jingle a handful of loose silver in his pocket, and by-and-by pulled it out, regarded it mechanically, and mechanically returned it. He began to make excursions to the door, and to return in a wandering and uncertain manner. Once he shook hands, and said, 'Good morning.' But even after this he lingered.

The Major regarded him more attentively, and at last Sullivan, seeming on a sudden to pluck up resolution, advanced and touched him with an air of apology on the shoulder.

'If you could spare me ten minutes of your time Major Morton,' he said, with a manner of unusual solemnity, 'I should be obliged by your advice.'

'In what way,' asked the Major, 'can I be of service to you?'

The Major made his adieux, manifestly to the disappointment of the ladies, and followed Sullivan into the street.

'What is it?' he asked.

'I can't tell you here,' Sullivan answered. 'Wait till we get into my room.'

The Major walked on in silence, and in the course of a minute or two found himself seated alone with Sullivan. The little man was profoundly dejected. He polished his baldness nervously with a doubtful handkerchief, which he afterwards rolled into a ball, and, rubbing the palms of his hands with this, he glanced twice or thrice at the Major before he began his statement.

'Look here,' he said, suddenly, 'I will begin at the beginning.'

'As a general rule,' responded the Major, 'it's a good place to begin at.'

'I was in Paris thirteen years ago,' said Mr. Sullivan, 'and there I knew a blackguard by the name of Peltzer. I have always been a great deal too careless about the kind of men I have known,' pursued the poor Cyrus, wagging his head sorrowfully; 'but if I had guessed what the fellow was, I wouldn't have known him at all.'

'What was he?' asked the Major.

'Well,' said Sullivan, mournfully, 'he wasn't anything a man ought to be, and he was about everything a man ought not to be. He had been a pickpocket; he had been a card-sharper; and I have found out that, since I saw him for the last time in Paris, he has had twelve years for burglary.'

'Nice man,' said the Major, almost warmly.

'You'd say so, if you saw him,' answered Cyrus. 'I met him in London, a little while back, and I was fool enough to speak to him. He came and planted himself on me, and made me keep him until I ran away. Last night he met me in the street, and made me split my little savings with him.'

'Why did you do it?' asked the Major.

'I could not help it,' the little man answered. 'But I haven't told my story yet. When I saw him in Paris, thirteen years ago last winter, I was coming home to London, and he was at the railway station. He pointed out a man there who was also going to London, and he asked me to watch him, and to tell him where the fellow went. I asked him why.'

'Naturally,' said the Major, with an encouraging nod, for Sullivan was evidently in need of encouragement, and told his story haltingly.

'He said that by watching this man, and by finding out who he was and where he went to, it was likely that we might make a great deal of money. I did not know how that was to be done, but I followed the man.

'He came, in the first place, to a house close by here. He was very poorly dressed at that time; but he went out at night and bought decent clothes. Next morning he went down to a little country place, which I won't mention just yet, and there he walked straight into a very big property. I sent the news of what I

had learned to Peltzer, but the letter came back. He had gone to the galleys. When I met him here a month or two ago, and was such a fool as to speak to him almost the first thing he asked me was if I knew anything about the man he had set me to watch. I told him "Yes"; and the beggar laid hold of me as if he wanted to eat me. He asked if he was rich, and I told him 'Yes' again; and then he said that there was nothing this man had that he would not part with, to the last penny, if he knew what Peltzer had to tell him.'

'Um!' said the Major. His earlier knowledge of Mr. Sullivan was not altogether without weight. He was generally disposed to scepticism in regard to anything Cyrus might say; but, on the whole, he inclined to a moderate belief in him at present. 'Did he tell you what his hold on the man was?'

'It came out at last,' said Cyrus, 'that he was going to charge the man with murder.'

It was at this point that the Major became really convinced of his companion's veracity. The harmless Cyrus was unaccustomed to deal with problems so momentous as that which now oppressed him, and it weighed him down altogether. He had forgotten even to embroider his story with invention.

'He came to me last night,' he continued, 'and made me split my savings with him. He got the money out of me in order to go down there and denounce the man, and try, of course, to bleed him.

He said we were to go shares in what he got; but of course I should never see a penny if I wanted it, and I couldn't touch it if he offered it.'

'Well,' said the Major, 'it's a queer story. What do you want to ask my advice about?'

Sullivan, making no verbal response, arose, and turned his back upom his companion. He drew from an inner breast-pocket a letter, from which he removed the envelope, and, laying this upon the table with the superscription downwards, set his hand upon it and held out the letter to the Major.

'Read that,' he said, with a face and voice expressive of something like desperation.

The Major leaned back in his chair, threw one leg over the other, and read murmuringly:

'SIR,

'I am informed that a very horrible danger overhangs an English gentleman of high position and unblemished reputation, who, thirteen years ago, bore in Paris the name of Auguste Moreau. If that gentleman is known to you, it is of the utmost moment that he should at once be informed of the danger which threatens him. I shall be happy to give any particulars which may be required at my hands. If there is no truth in the positive and appalling statements which have reached me, I can, at least, have done no harm by forwarding this letter.

'Your obedient servant,

'CYRUS SULLIVAN.

'Well,' said the Major, 'what is the object of this letter?'

Sullivan sat silent.

'Do you want to blackmail the man on your own account?' asked the Major sardonically.

'No,' said Cyrus. But the denial sounded indeterminate.

'What do you want to ask my advice about?' asked the Major.

Sullivan took up the letter from where Morton's hand had let it fall upon the table, and put it in its envelope, which he still held with the superscription downward.

The Major rolled and lit a cigarette, and after a pause of considerable length repeated his query.

'What do you want to ask my advice about?'

'I felt,' said Sullivan, looking up at him, 'as if I couldn't hold the confounded thing myself. I felt this morning as if it would burst me, if I didn't speak to somebody about it.'

'You don't want advice, then?' asked the Major.

'Oh, but I do, though!' cried the poor little Cyrus eagerly. 'Upon my word, I don't know what to do. Ought I to send this letter or not?'

'What is your object in sending the letter?' demanded Morton.

Cyrus glanced at him with a look half doubt, half guilt, and all appeal.

'I don't know,' he answered falteringly. 'Perhaps,'

he added, in an apologetic, shame-faced way, 'there might be something in it.'

'What does that mean?' asked the Major.

'Why, you know,' said Mr. Sullivan, vaguely and guiltily, 'he's a very wealthy cove.'

'And that means,' said Morton, 'that you do want to blackmail the man on your own account.'

'No; it doesn't,' Cyrus protested; 'but he might feel grateful for a'—he paused and tried back, searching for a fit expression—'he might feel grateful for a tip.'

'And so,' said the Major, 'for a pecuniary consideration you are willing to become an accessory after the fact to murder.'

Cyrus's aspect of guilt deepened upon him, and he rubbed his hands with an air of almost dog-like propitiation.

'Now, Mr. Sullivan,' said the Major, almost severely, 'I won't have anything to do with this extremely shady business. I decline to advise you upon this matter in any way. I don't know anything at all about it. I shall make it my business to forget all you have said to me; or, if I recall it at all, I shall remember it alongside a good many other startling narratives I have heard from your lips. Narratives,' he added, the severity of his visage broken by a twinkle which the abashed Cyrus did not see, 'narratives which do more credit to your imagination than to your moral sense.'

'This is true!' cried Sullivan. 'Major Morton, I give you my word of honour it is as true as gospel.'

'Supposing it to be true,' said the Major, rising, and laying a hand upon his hat, 'it is not, so far as I can see, any affair of yours or mine. If a gentleman, now prosperous and universally respected, chose to commit murder thirteen years ago, and if a brother scoundrel chooses to blackmail him or denounce him, the only concern an honest man could possibly have would be, without any hope of fee or reward at all, to denounce the pair. The one is a murderer as much as his accomplice.'

'Thirteen years is a long time,' said Sullivan.

'It is thirteen years too long,' responded the Major.

'Don't you think,' asked Cyrus feebly, 'that it would be rather hard lines to be nailed after thirteen years?'

'You and I, Mr. Sullivan,' replied the Major, 'stand upon platforms which are wide apart. You can do, sir, what the devil you please.'

He took up his hat, fixed it deliberately, and moved towards the door, the poor Cyrus sitting quite crushed and forlorn, with bent head and dejected countenance.

'I am not quite certain,' said the Major, pausing at the door, and turning, 'that a good citizen would not feel it his duty to take this story of yours to the authorities. But I do not profess to be a model citizen myself. I am a man of constitutional timidity and shyness, and I hate a row.'

'For Heaven's sake,' groaned Cyrus, 'don't split on me, Major Morton! I see now what I ought to have done, but I can't do it. I wouldn't have the man's life upon my hands, sir, for all the gold in the cellars of the Bank of England. If I did a thing like that, I don't believe I should ever go to sleep again. But if you split I am ruined. It would all get into the papers, and I should lose the only berth I have.'

'Every citizen,' said the Major, 'owes a duty to the commonwealth. If you are really aware of the fact that a murder has been committed, and that the murderer has gone undiscovered, and lived in prosperity and general esteem for thirteen years, it is your plain duty to lay what you know before the authorities. If I believed you, it would be my plain duty to lay the matter before them. But, you see, I do not believe you, and I won't believe you. You may understand that, if you like, as expressing no doubt of your veracity.'

Cyrus, sitting at the table during the Major's address, toyed nervously with the letter, turning it this way and that, until, with a little gesture of despair, he threw it from him as Morton spoke his final words, and the letter fell, superscription upwards, on the table. It was addressed in a very legible and clerklike hand, and the writing was rather unusually large. The latter lay within a yard of Morton's nose, and before he knew it, he had read the address. Sullivan looked up at him, swiftly, and laid a rapid

hand upon the letter. But the motion was merely instinctive; for his glance, rapid and furtive as it was, had told him clearly that the address had been read. There was silence for the space of a full minute, and then the Major spoke.

'Is that the man,' he asked, 'to whom the letter is addressed?'

'Yes,' said Cyrus.

Then there was silence for another minute or thereabouts.

'Are you going to send that letter?' Morton asked.

'I don't know,' said Sullivan miserably.

'Well,' said the Major, with the air of a man who has made up his mind, 'I won't have art or part in the matter.'

And with that he left the room, walked downstairs and into the street. Arrived there, he paused, and, drawing a letter from his pocket, read it with an air of profound chagrin. The street was full of traffic, and the Major, having planted himself in the middle of the footway, was a good deal hustled. But he stood there until he had read the letter through. It came from Dick Douglas, who had now been a visitor at Mr. Kenyon's house for some six weeks; and it sang Helen, Helen, and nothing but Helen, from beginning to end. Douglas, in his letters, which had been very regular indeed, had clung to this theme with remarkable tenacity. He had scarcely ever varied from it, and his old bachelor chum had known for what now

seemed a long time that the young fellow was falling more and more in love with his host's niece. And now this horrible charge hung over the host himself.

The Major was shaken out of his ordinary equanimity, and he acted with less than his common coolness. He dived into an hotel, consulted a time-table, and then rushed off to the nearest telegraph-office and wired to Douglas, 'Meet me, railway station, Perry Haughton, six thirty.' Then he hurried away to Dick's chambers, packed a meagre portmanteau, carried it to the railway station, and in due time was whirled away into the country.

XIII.

Mr. Gabriel Kenyon began to see that in inviting Douglas to the Lodge he had committed a blunder—possibly a blunder of the first order. When you have nvited a man to stay a specified time with you, it is not the easiest thing in the world to get rid of him before that specified time has expired. There are many ways by which the thing can be done, but all but one of them involve a departure from strict veracity. Strict veracity is a beautiful thing in its way, but social and sociable people contrive for the most part to live without it. A good many people, finding a guest unwelcome or undesirable, would be able to equivocate with him, to find pressing business for themselves, to invent a family lawyer, a sick friend, a doctor's stern injunction to travel. But the sturdy moralists who do these things resemble the happy gourmand whose digestive organs have not yet begun to fail him—they commit indiscretions and feel no evil consequences. The dyspeptic views their achievements with dread, their ventures look sinful to him. In like manner Mr. Gabriel, whose spiritual peptics

were, as we know, long since disordered, recoiled from the least offence to conscience. There were many occasions upon which a little trifle of a lie would have been a luxury to him, but he never felt free to indulge himself. Happy people who can eat what they will! Twice happy they of robust moral digestion! But nobody can have his cake and eat it. Mr. Gabriel had eaten all his cake at a sitting, so to speak. He hankered after more, pretty often, but suppressed his longings as best he might, and was horribly afraid of them, as evidencing an unregenerate frame of mind.

The blunder into which he felt he had fallen with respect to Douglas, was this. He had forgotten that his niece was growing up to be a woman, and, in many respects, an unusually attractive and charming one, and it had never occurred to him that she could yet be looked on as anything but a child.

There were few persons in the world whom Mr. Gabriel supposed to be less capable of giving him lessons than young Lord Bagleigh. But it was from Lord Bagleigh that he received his first lesson upon this question.

His Lordship rode over one morning and asked to see Mr. Kenyon alone. Mr. Kenyon was at the moment engaged in interviewing a poacher, whom he at once remanded on receipt of Bagleigh's message. The wrongdoer and his satellites of the county police force having withdrawn, the visitor was shown into

Gabriel's library. He was pale, and his manner was distinctly nervous. He was dressed within an inch of his life, and had pitilessly garrotted himself with a collar of unusual proportions. He was always very accurately groomed, but this morning he was more than usually sleek, and he had, in honour of the special sentiment of the day, for the first time assumed the manly decoration of bangles, which some gifted spirit had but newly discovered to form an appropriate finish to male attire. He was partly proud and partly ashamed of these, and manifested alternate gusts of desire to show them and not to show them. When he had shown them he became suddenly ashamed of them, and hid them. When, after a minute or two, he had disguised them, it seemed necessary to put them in evidence.

After an exchange of the ordinary salutations, his Lordship sat down, and, toying surreptitiously with the bangle, said it was a fine day. Gabriel assented, and his Lordship sank into a confused silence. It was improbable, on the face of things, that he should have ridden over and have demanded a private interview for the purpose of making this statement only, but for a minute or two he made no further conversational effort.

It was a part of Gabriel's general plan to allow people who had business with him to make their own opportunities for introducing it. He had found from experience that the waiting game was his strong point.

But Bagleigh paused so long, and was so evidently ill at ease, that at last he felt compelled to lead him on.

'You wished to see me privately?' said Gabriel.

'Y-e-s,' responded Bagleigh.

'We are quite alone,' said Gabriel, smiling, when another pause had shown more clearly than ever the completeness of his Lordship's embarrassment.

Bagleigh smiled at him, with the look of a martyr in his agony.

Mr. Kenyon was a man who was largely influenced by the territorial and aristocratic sentiments, but for the moment he almost despised the vacuous and helpless young gentleman before him.

'Look here,' said his Lordship suddenly, 'I've been thinking——'

He stopped there as if the statement half ashamed him.

'Yes,' said Gabriel suavely, 'you have been thinking?'

'I've been thinking about getting married,' said Bagleigh.

'Getting married?' said Gabriel. 'Yes? By no means an unwise reflection.'

'I think, you know,' said his Lordship, speaking rapidly, and with something of a nervous stammer, 'I think, you know that a fellow ought to get married. I think it keeps a fellow straight—gives a fellow an object, don't you know? and all that sort of thing.'

'Quite so,' Gabriel answered, caressing one hand with the palm of the other, and leaning forward with an air half of humility and half of patronage; 'quite so—quite so.'

'I've been in a deuce of a state about it,' said his Lordship, 'for no end of a time, and I can't stand it any longer.'

Gabriel began to flutter a little. He began to guess. His first answer to the guess was, 'Impossible.' His next took the form of a question, 'Was it so impossible, after all?'

'Have you,' he demanded, 'fixed upon any special young lady, or is the desire you express a merely general——'

He spoke with a little drawl, pausing between each word, and finding no conveniently-rounded finish to his sentence, he closed it with a little flourish of the hands and a nervous smile.

His Lordship, who had been absorbed in the contemplation of his bangles, hid them with a sudden air of shame, and found nothing to say for himself.

'I presume,' said Gabriel, 'that you have an actual object in your mind.'

'Yes,' said Bagleigh, with an air so furtive and shame-faced that he might have been confessing to a petty larceny.

'Was it,' asked Gabriel, 'your intention to confide in me, or to ask my advice?'

'Yes, said Bagleigh.

'Well, I am sure,' Kenyon answered, making his voice and manner as genial as he could, 'if I can be of the slightest assistance to you in this matter—a matter so important to yourself—I shall really be delighted.'

'Shall you?' cried his Lordship eagerly. 'I am glad of that.'

'Delighted,' Gabriel replied, with a charming air of innocence. 'Now,' he added, 'in what way do you think I can be of service?'

'Look here,' said Bagleigh, with an effort, 'I want your permission——'

He had begun with an evident intent to declare himself at full; but here he floundered and broke down.

'My permission?' asked Gabriel, a little blinder than he need have been. But he, too, was flurried by the turn the interview had taken.

'Yes,' said Bagleigh, 'that's where it is.'

The statement was vague, yet it appeared to justify Gabriel's belief.

'Excuse me, Bagleigh,' he said; 'but let me ask you to make yourself quite clear. You ask my permission to do what?'

'I want to know,' said Bagleigh desperately, 'if you will let me speak to Miss Kenyon.'

'Do I understand,' Gabriel asked him, 'that you desire to offer your hand to my niece?'

'Yes,' said his Lordship, 'that's what I want.'

'The proposal,' said Gabriel, 'takes me aback a little, I confess.'

'Don't say that,' cried Bagleigh beseechingly.

'My niece,' said Gabriel, 'is quite a child. I have never yet associated her in my mind with the idea of marriage. You have, I suppose, fully made up your mind upon the matter?'

'Oh, yes,' said Bagleigh. 'I'm quite set upon it, I assure you.'

'After all,' said Gabriel, who was becoming inured to the position, 'Helen is nearly eighteen years of age. It is not quite unheard of that a girl of that age should have suitors.'

'Not at all,' said his Lordship, who also began to be a little more at ease now that his mission was in part accomplished. 'There was Straker, married quite a girl only a month or two ago, and she turned out to have been married before, and to have a husband living—no end of a bad lot, don't you know.'

He seemed to perceive when he had spoken that the illustration was hardly germane to the case, and began to fumble feebly beneath his wristbands.

The influence of the territorial and aristocratic sentiment was almost inadequate to Gabriel's need, but he said nothing, which, all things considered, was, perhaps, the wisest thing for him to do. His Lordship was in the state of mind to be upset by a trifle; and, having realised the idea that he was an ass, he permitted himself to be embarrassed by it terribly.

'May I ask,' said Gabriel after a while, 'if it is your Lordship's desire that I should speak to my niece?'

'I should be awfully obliged if you would, don't you know,' returned his Lordship; and, rising, he advanced to shake hands.

'You'll stay to luncheon?' said Gabriel.

'No,' returned his Lordship, with emphasis; 'not to-day. The fact is, I just rode over——'

'I will speak to my niece, then,' said Gabriel smoothly, 'and will lay your Lordship's flattering proposal before her.'

Bagleigh got away precipitately, and at the gates encountered Douglas, who saluted him with more amiability than common. His Lordship, who had been hurried into premature action by the young barrister's presence, was not disposed to accept his overtures, and contented himself by a surly nod.

Gabriel found no opportunity to approach his niece with any announcement of the honour Lord Bagleigh had laid upon her until late that evening. He spent the greater part of the day in thinking about it, and being, from the beginning, an egotist of the profounder sort, he surveyed it entirely in those aspects which concerned himself. To begin with, it was necessary to appreciate the position of Providence in the matter, and to appreciate it fairly. If there was one thing in the world about which Gabriel Kenyon had come to be surer than another, it was that nothing happened to him without having a definite intention in it. Trifles

assumed an appearance of first-rate importance in his eyes, and events of real weight in his affairs were providential tests. It was significant of the man and of his practised way of thinking that the more inflamed, irritated, and generally abnormal his conscience grew, the more he was inclined to believe it to be healthy. If ever his faithful watch-dog ceased to bark, he himself took up the task and barked until he wakened it.

Now, in view of Lord Bagleigh's offer for Helen's hand, he began to take himself to task with much zeal as to whether he himself were going to reap any advantage by this unlooked-for circumstance; as to whether he were getting to over-value this world's goods; as to whether the influence of the territorial and aristocratic sentiment were too powerful within him; as to whether the proposal and its consequences were a cross to be carried or a temptation to be shunned.

If it had not been for the crime of more than thirteen years ago, his conscience would never have grown to be so tender. But, apart from this, to all practical intent, the crime was dead and buried and forgotten. Gabriel knew well enough the effect it had had upon him, and looked upon it, so far as it went, as an unmixed good. But, after this lapse of years, it was not easy to feel that he, the present Gabriel Kenyon, was in any way responsible for the act of Auguste Moreau. Actually, in his own mind, he dissociated himself from that poverty-stricken and

hungry criminal. Months of suffering and of terror, years of goodness, blemished only by those little peccadilloes of which the noblest may at times be guilty, had set him at so great a distance from his former self that they were quite apart. He had outlived that latest punishment of his crime which had developed itself in his affection for his niece. It is pretty evident that nothing in the whole inner furniture of the man was sound; but this love of his for the girl was as near being natural as it was possible for it to be. It was not terrible to him, as it had been, but was a sign, in his infernal juggling casuistry, that he was reconciled to the world, to himself, and to Heaven.

But, indeed, this thing was certain: except for the vigilant watch which he kept upon his conscience (which he felt to be a thing in itself altogether admirable), he could long since have been at rest. He inflamed that monitor wilfully, and of malice aforethought; he kept him awake at night, and he sedulously poked at him in his kennel all day long. He was determined to be virtuous and ill at ease. He thought that he was the chief of sinners, and rejoiced in a fat humility that he should think so. He was conscious there was no equally worthy testimonial to grace.

Gabriel and Douglas were alone in the drawing-room that evening, when dinner was announced. Gabriel was silent, being occupied with his own reflections

about Lord Bagleigh's proposal of the morning; and Dick was also silent, being occupied by the works of love in idleness.

'Dinner is on the table, sir,' said the venerable Partridge, appearing at the door.

Gabriel rose, and motioned Douglas to lead the way downstairs. It was one of Gabriel's boasts to be as punctual as Time himself, and he would allow nothing to wait for anybody. He manifested even towards his niece a little frosty displeasure when she infringed this rule of his, and, as he followed Douglas down the staircase, his manner was iced, and he wore an air of injury.

He was scarcely half-way to the dining-room, however, when he turned at the sound of the girl's step behind him, and beheld her radiant. She paused, and made him a mock curtsey.

'You were getting ready to scold,' she said—'I knew it by the shape of your shoulders.'

Gabriel smiled at this, and, notwithstanding his passion for punctuality, waited for her to approach him, and stood there smiling with an outstretched hand.

Where the girl stood there was quite a bower of greenery and flowers, and Douglas, who stood looking up from the foot of the staircase, thought he had never seen so charming a picture as she made. It is likely enough that he was right, for, as has been said already, she was unusually pretty, and he himself was far

enough in love by this time to have made a goddess of her. She was a trifle too saucy for a goddess at the moment; but, to the young man's mind, all moods became her, and he was in a ridiculous condition of charmed surprise about her constantly. Little changes that to anybody but a lover would have passed unremarked—little alterations of mood and expression, posture and accent, were to him so many revelations. There is probably no truer indication of the beginning of love in a young man's mind than this. A careful observer of the history of the passion would probably pronounce the condition indispensable; and any young man who may doubt the quality of his own emotions is invited to apply to himself this test, with the assurance that he will find it an unfailing touchstone.

It came into Gabriel's mind that Bagleigh's choice was by no means a foolish one, and that the girl would do infinite credit to the title he offered her. He began at that moment to be distinctly ambitious of it, and, as a matter of course, countered sharply upon his own desire by declaring that it would be a terrible sacrifice to part with her. He was always sparring with his own wishes and emotions in this way; and, though he was often severely mauled in the process, he contrived sometimes to win. His affection for his niece was strong enough to make the prospect of their parting a pain. His own suffering was the only salve he had learned to apply to conscience. And so, with

his own trained faculty in that direction, he set to work to be deliberately tender and unhappy about the chance of losing Helen. Before dinner was over, he had so far succeeded that whatever advantage lay in the proposal affected her alone, whilst her well-being was to be a sorrow to him.

The windows of the dining-room were open, and the evening sunlight flooded the lawns and gardens of the Lodge. Gabriel was silent, but the two young people held a fairly brisk conversation, talking with an appearance of ease and naturalness which, to an acute observer, might have worn something of an artificial air. Their intercourse, on the surface, was very frank, candid, and natural; but it was noticeable that there were no pauses in their talk. There was a desire to keep the conversational ball constantly in movement. If one allowed it to drop, the other picked it up and set it going again with a suspicious agility. This was a characteristic of any and every *tête-à-tête* they held. And Gabriel's silence and abstraction—which were unusually marked, even for him—seemed to leave them quite alone together this evening. They talked away busily, therefore, on all manner of topics; and Gabriel, rousing himself now and again to listen, heard nothing that might not have been cried from the house-tops, without putting either of the young people to the blush. There was nothing—there never had been anything from the beginning of their acquaintance—in their talk which

verged upon sentiment. They might even have been accused of flippancy. But the young man was almost always engaged in inward combat with his own sentiments; and the girl was half-conscious of a fear, though less than half conscious of what the fear might mean.

When the meal was over, and Gabriel and his guest were left alone, the elder broke his silence. Except for the murmured grace with which the repast was begun and ended, he had not spoken until this.

'Will you smoke your cigar alone this evening, Douglas?' he asked. 'I shall be occupied for half an hour.'

He was always disposed to be ceremonious, and he bowed after this small speech with an exaggerated stiff courtesy. The young man strolled through the open windows on to the lawn, and there wandered to and fro in the mellow evening air thinking of Helen, and forgetful of the unlighted cigar between his lips.

The girl was singing somewhere within the house, in a clear treble like a bird's, and he stood still to listen to her. She was warbling the air of some simple old ballad, without its words, and had sung it already twice or thrice, when she stopped in the middle of the tune, and Douglas was fain to finish it for himself, being one of those people to whom an unended tune is a thing unbearable. His own voice was not the most tuneful organ in the world, and he

laughed at the contrast it made, and then, forgetting all things else, went on strolling up and down in the late sunlight, thinking of the girl.

Her song had been cut short by Gabriel's entry to the room.

'My dear,' said Gabriel, laying a hand upon her shoulder, 'I wish to speak to you.' Something of an unusual gravity in his manner impressed her, and she looked at him attentively. 'I wish you,' he continued, 'to weigh what I shall say to you before answering it. Sit down.'

He placed a chair for her, and, when she had seated herself, he walked up and down before her, with bent head and hands clasped behind him; she resting her hands lightly folded in her lap, and following him with her eyes. His exordium, and his gravity combined with it, awoke her interest. She was even a little afraid.

'You are eighteen years of age in six or seven weeks' time, my dear,' he said, pausing before her and raising his eyes to her face. 'You are growing to be a woman.'

Her only answer to this was given in a little half-embarrassed laugh; and he betook himself to his promenade again.

'I had a visit this morning,' he went on, casting a side-long glance upon her, 'from my estimable young friend, Lord Bagleigh.'

She unclasped her hands with a quick, nervous

movement, but immediately returned to her old attitude; and Gabriel, without in the least knowing why, felt the slight gesture to be disconcerting.

'Lord Bagleigh,' he pursued, still marching up and down, 'is a young man of exceptional position. He is a young man who conceals beneath an exterior of carelessness many admirable qualities and a nature of much warmth and goodness.'

Outside, the light, though softened, was still clear. But in this curtained room the air was dim. Gabriel's glance at his niece's face had told him nothing; but the girl had gone suddenly quite pale, and her hands clenched each other tightly. She would have had little of that penetration which is known to characterize her sex, if she had not guessed by this time what was coming. It was her first experience, and she was a good deal agitated by it.

'The object of Lord Bagleigh's visit to me this morning,' Gabriel went on, 'was to make a formal application for your hand in marriage.'

And here he experienced a surprise. Perhaps that growth towards womanhood with which he had only that morning begun to credit his niece was further advanced than he had fancied. Perhaps circumstances, of which he had been too blind and self-observant to take cognisance, might have helped it in these later weeks to a quick development. Perhaps the mere fact of finding herself on ground which, in

virtue of her sex, was native to her, gave her a strength and decision she had never felt before.

'I am very much obliged to Lord Bagleigh,' she said, 'but you must ask him never to say anything more of this.'

'My dear,' began Gabriel, drawing his hands from behind him and taking one of hers, 'consider.'

'There is nothing to consider,' she responded; 'I could never think of marrying Lord Bagleigh.'

Until that moment Gabriel had never felt conscious of a will of his own in respect to his niece's conduct. She had never in anything opposed him, and he could not, all at once, realize the belief that she would actually oppose him here.

'You must not look at this matter like a child, my dear.'

He spoke with that suave superiority of age which is, perhaps, in matters of this sort, one of the most troublesome things youth has to bear.

'Lord Bagleigh is a young man who does very well to laugh at,' interjected Miss Helen. Gabriel regarded her angrily. 'Uncle,' said the girl, slipping one arm about his neck, 'you do not wish me to marry Lord Bagleigh?'

Her caresses were extremely rare, and the appeal and the caress together half disarmed him.

'I want you,' he answered, guarding himself against himself, and growing a little querulous in doing it, 'I want you to look seriously at this proposal, and not to

throw it on one side as if it were a toy, and you a wilful child.'

'Very well, dear,' she answered. 'How long shall I take to think of it?'

'I don't like your tone, my dear,' said Gabriel; 'I don't like your tone at all. Young men have hearts, my dear. A proposal of this kind is a serious thing, and is to be taken seriously.'

'I take it very seriously indeed,' his niece answered. 'If, for form's sake, you ask me to think of it, I will take as long as you please, and think of it as often as I can.'

'You mean to say, then,' he answered, in some heat of anger, 'that, however long you may take to think of this, you will not change your mind about it?'

His tone and manner surprised her. They had never been in opposition until now, and, indeed, she had hardly ever found herself opposed to anybody.

'I cannot change my mind,' she said.

'Take a week to think of it,' Gabriel answered, fearful of pressing her too hard at once. 'Give me your answer in a week—not now.'

'Very well, dear,' she answered, drawing herself away from him.

The interview ended there, and Helen retired to her own room, a little bower of a place which overlooked the gardens. It had been her mother's favourite retiring-room; and a good many of her girlish treasures were still to be seen there—old-fashioned

little boxes decorated with sea-shells, daguerreotypes of schoolfellows (whose features were so faded that they were only to be seen when the silver-plate was held aslant), birthday books and summer annuals, with faded flowers pressed between the leaves. Standing at the open window, she saw Douglas still lounging lonely to and fro upon the lawn beneath. He looked up suddenly and brightly, as though her presence had actually touched him.

'Good-night, Mr. Douglas,' she said, nodding to him through the open window.

'Good-night, Miss Kenyon,' he answered, raising his hat, and looking up to her.

At this moment Gabriel re-entered the dining-room, and it was then for the first time that he actually realized that his guest was a young man, his niece a young woman, and he himself the least guarded of tacticians.

XIV.

Douglas, happily unconscious of Gabriel's discovery, stood looking up at the little figure above him, until Helen, with a final nod and a smile, drew down the window, and disappeared. Then, not noticing Gabriel in the dim twilight of the dining-room, Dick turned away and strolled until he reached the gravel drive, and, pursuing this, came to the gates. He stood there, thinking of Helen, and nothing but Helen, until the sound of a footstep awoke him from his reverie. He turned, and saw a small boy, who wore a kind of half uniform, and carried a leather satchel.

'If you please, sir,' piped the boy, 'are you Mr. Douglas?'

'I am Mr. Douglas.'

The boy produced a telegram addressed to 'Richard Douglas, Esquire, the Lodge, Perry Haughton.'

Whilst Douglas broke the envelope, the boy was making off.

'Wait a moment,' said Dick, 'I may have to send an answer.'

A glance at the telegram showed him that it came

from Major Morton, and that it invited him to meet the Major at the railway station at half-past six that evening. The boy stood with so strongly marked an air of guilt upon him that the recipient of the message was at once assured that it was by his unassisted agency that the telegram had been delayed.

'Received here,' said the form, 'at 5.13.'

'How is it,' Douglas asked severely, 'that you have taken three hours to bring this telegram from the post-office?'

'There ain't no telegraph at the post-office,' said the boy, defending himself obliquely, after the manner of his kind—'the telegraph's at the railway station.'

'This,' said Dick, with an added severity, 'is an evasion—the merest of evasions. How is it that you did not bring this telegram three hours ago?' The right toe, the right knee, and the knuckles of the criminal's right hand bore the marks of a clayey soil. 'You have been stopping to play at marbles, you young villain!' said the barrister. This swift detection of the particular crime of which he had been guilty was incomprehensible to the defaulter. 'You will live,' said Douglas, assuming a judicial air, 'to be hanged. How do you know, sir, that the fate of empires may not tremble in the balance whilst you engage in frivolous pursuits, and waste the time and unprofitably absorb the revenues of the State?'

At this, the small boy, whose conscience was already too heavily burdened, began to weep with so doleful a

vigour that Douglas destroyed the value of the moral lesson he had striven to enforce upon him by the gift of an undeserved sixpence, and bade him go about his business.

'If you please, sir,' said the small boy, then, 'a gent was asking for you at the railway station.'

'When?' Douglas demanded.

'He came down by the six-thirty, sir,' said the small boy, 'from London, and he asked the station-master if he could say if Mr. Douglas was in Perry Haughton. The station-master said as he believed you was, sir; and the gent said as if you come to the railway-station later on, he'd gone to the hotel, sir.'

Douglas, dismissing the messenger, walked towards the hotel, wondering what might have induced the Major to visit him. Arrived there, he was in the act of inquiring at the bar, when the Major himself rose from the corner of the apartment and approached him. The two shook hands, Douglas with a pleased warmth and the Major with an odd kind of doggedness.

'What's the matter?' Douglas asked him.

'I thought,' said the Major, 'that I'd run down and have a look at you. Come into the smoking-room—there's nobody there—let us have a chat.'

The old campaigner's manner was curious, and his companion was impressed by it with the idea that some business of importance had led him here.

Save for themselves, the smoking-room was empty.

'What is it?' Douglas asked, when he found that they were alone.

The Major set down the glass he had carried from the bar, and dropped into a seat with an unsuccessful pretence of friendly commonplace.

'I thought,' he said, 'I'd just run down and have a look at you.'

There was nothing in this that need have surprised Douglas; but the Major's air and manner were at variance with the purport of his words.

'Are you quite sure there is nothing wrong, old man?' Dick asked him.

'I don't know how you can expect anybody to be sure of that,' replied the Major.

'Look here, Morton,' said Dick, 'if you have anything to say to me, don't break it. Of all the devices for doubling the forces of misfortune, that is the most successful. You look like a bearer of bad news. If you are, give it me at once, with no beating about the bush.'

'My dear Dick,' responded the Major, 'I am the bearer of no news at all. I have absolutely nothing to tell you, except that I wanted to see you, and that I am here.'

Morton had contrived, in the course of his journey, to reach the conclusion that he had been started upon a false errand, and he had resolved to say nothing at all about the original object of his journey. His protest was quite enough for Douglas;

and, in a minute or two, they were chatting gaily about trifles.

'I am getting back,' said the Major, 'into a good opinion of my fellow-men. Did I ever speak to you about my grandmother's second cousin, my great-aunt Maria?'

'Never,' answered Douglas.

'I call her my great-aunt Maria,' said the Major, 'by way of simplifying things. The relationship is distant; but I have always been a favourite of the old lady's, and she has announced her intention of leaving me a somewhat considerable sum of money. The intention has been announced for a long time, but now the poor old lady is very frail and old, and it seems likely to be fulfilled. I mention this,' the Major added, 'because it will explain to you how I came to be dining the other night at the same table with so respectable a personage as your host's solicitor. I mentioned your name, said I had heard of him through you, and spoke of you much more highly than you deserve. To my surprise, he also spoke much more highly of you than you deserve, and he told me that you were likely to do extremely well.'

Dick laughed, and put the subject by.

'It is not in mortals to deserve success,' he answered; 'but we'll do what we can—Sempronius. It is pleasanter out of doors than here,' he added; 'let us have a stroll together.'

They went out into the quiet of the village street,

arm-in-arm. The latest lingering glow of twilight still hung in the higher skies, and all the sounds of village life that reached their ears had a tranquil clearness in their tone. They chatted in subdued voices, as if there were a something sacred in the quiet of the time, and they feared to break upon it.

Between the narrow ribbon of a foot-path and the broader strip of horse-road, when they were once outside the straggling double line of houses, there lay a broad band of turf; and walking noiselessly along this they were both suddenly startled by a loud ejaculation.

'Sacré nom du diable!'

Twenty yards in front, a little lonely man had pursued the same road with them since they had left the hotel. He was half hidden in the obscurity of the evening, and, with his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, and bent head, had lounged on altogether unregarded. He was met at the bend of the lane by another shadowy figure; and this new-comer was the author of the exclamation.

'What!' said the little man, looking up, and speaking in English-sounding French, 'you here!'

'Behold me!' said the other, in a croaking triumph.

The Major drew his companion from the strip of turf into the horse-road; and when their steps became audible, the two who had just encountered each other turned swiftly, looked towards them, and, as if by one impulse, moved away.

'Major,' said Douglas, 'that was little Sullivan.'

'I thought so,' said the Major.

'I am sure of it,' said Dick. 'I knew his voice at once. What is he doing here, I wonder?'

'What a tiny bit of a world it is!' said the Major. 'One is always running unexpectedly against people one knows.'

It was noticeable that from this point the Major's flow of spirits became fitful. Sometimes he talked with a hectic gaiety for a minute or two, and then would sink into silence, leaving a sentence incomplete.

'Major,' said Dick, coupling this with his friend's odd demeanour at their meeting, 'what's the matter with you? Tell me. There is something on your mind.'

'There are many things upon my mind,' replied the Major; 'but, upon my word of honour, I have nothing to tell you that it at all concerns me in the slightest degree to tell.'

With this assurance Dick was fain to be contented; and they had fallen to talk once more upon indifferent topics, when Mr. Kenyon, with his habitual stoop and his hands twined behind him, appeared in the roadway, and threw a friendly greeting to his guest.

Since the moment, now nearly an hour ago, when Gabriel's eyes had been suddenly opened to the possibilities of Douglas's presence in his house, he had

given himself up to reflections on the best means of getting quit of him. He was still in conscience bound to do what he could for the young gentleman's advancement, and was quite resolved to acquit himself to admiration; but he was not bound to make matrimonial chances for him, to his own disadvantage. He knew nothing of what was growing up in the young fellow's mind, or of what might be growing up in the girl's; he only recognised a possibility which had hitherto remained unseen, and was on his guard against it.

Since it would be immoral to pretend business for the sake of shortening Douglas's visit, he had resolved to create business which would take himself and Helen away. He needed a day or two to put his invention into practice, and in the meantime it was natural to seem unusually friendly with his guest in order that he might have the better show of reluctance in parting from him when the time came. His greeting, therefore, was unusually warm and cordial, and he stopped short in the lane to exchange a genial word or two.

'My friend, Major Morton, Mr. Kenyon,' said Douglas.

Gabriel shook hands with Major Morton, and was a little effusive in his pleasure at meeting any friend of his dear and valued young friend.

The Major, with the memory of Sullivan's story of that afternoon still heavy on him, was not effusive.

'Is Major Morton visiting in the neighbourhood?' Gabriel asked.

'We are old friends,' said Dick, 'and he ran down to see me.'

'Pray, sir,' cried Gabriel, 'whilst you stay here, stay with me.'

'Thank you,' said the Major, rather coolly, 'but I go back to town to-morrow.'

Gabriel was pressing. A friend of Mr. Douglas's, staying at Perry Haughton, must not rest outside his walls. He was so very warm and genial about it that, without giving some actual reason for refusal, Morton felt that refusal was scarcely possible.

Mr. Kenyon dispatched a man to the hotel for the Major's belongings, and the three walked to the Lodge together.

It is probable that Mr. Kenyon imagined himself to have secured a curious guest in the person of Major Morton. That gentleman had next to nothing to say for himself, but sat for the most part in absolute silence, watching his host. Gabriel became aware that he was the object of the new-comer's constant and careful scrutiny; and, in his own keen and furtive way, he returned it. The battle (for in a little while it resolved itself to that) was unequal. The Major, being caught in the act of watching Gabriel, continued to watch him as though he had not been detected. Gabriel's glance being met by the Major, slid away instantly, and made many furtive approaches towards

him before it dared again to dwell upon his face.

When a man keeps a skeleton of Gabriel's sort in the cupboard, he is likely to be suspicious of other men's knowledge of it, or their suspicion of its existence. There was no reason to suspect the new-comer of anything, no reason in the world to suppose that he knew anything to Gabriel's disadvantage. But the discovered criminal is happy compared with the criminal undiscovered; and the guest's cold glance and brief replies played havoc with the host's nerves.

Douglas, who had never seen his old companion in the society of his social equals, set his curious bearing down to shyness: though he could hardly reconcile this theory with what he knew of Morton's character and career.

Up to now, the Major had only heard of Mr. Kenyon. Dick had been enthusiastic about his goodness—had chronicled his benefactions to the village, his leniency as a magistrate, his long-suffering and generosity as a landlord. The Major, who was by nature, belief, and practice a physiognomist, looked in Kenyon's countenance for a sign of the qualities he had heard attributed to him, and looked in vain. The man had suffered, and had suffered profoundly. That was evident. But, to the observer's mind, he had suffered selfishly; and his face confessed him capable of an egotism which might be more than ordinarily cruel.

Partly in pursuance of the resolve he had arrived at an hour or two before, and partly to conciliate this cold and watchful guest's opinion, Gabriel laid himself out to play the part of the cordial and amiable host. He took observant notice of the tint of his visitor's nose; and, though he had a constitutional dislike to a toper, he was willing to play upon what he supposed to be a foible. He produced a bottle of a certain wonderful old claret; but the Major only sipped at his glass, and was politely but stonily unsusceptible of pressure.

How far his opinions were influenced by the story he had heard, it might be difficult to say; but it is pretty certain that he would have met Kenyon with a frank dislike on whatever ground, and under what circumstances soever, they had encountered each other. As it was, the story, to the Major's mind, looked as though it might be true. Sullivan was here, and being here had a purpose. The man he had met in the lane was Peltzer, for a thousand pounds! It was hard to accept the hospitality held out to him under such conditions. The best he could do was to hold himself in a frozen state of non-committal, and to get away as soon as might be. He had resolved quite a long time ago—it seemed almost from the beginning of his journey—that he had no right to burden Douglas with a knowledge of Sullivan's tale. But, if the tale were true, and Peltzer were actually here, the blow must fall soon, and in the contempla-

tion of that possibility, the Major was at once curious and disturbed.

'If I may be excused, I will leave you and your friend to your devices,' said Kenyon, when he had spent an uncomfortable half hour with his guests. 'You know my ways. I am an early riser, Major Morton; and to be an early riser, one must retire early.'

He shook hands with a rather overdone affectation of geniality, and went away to his own room.

It happens, oftener than most people are disposed to imagine, that the mental atmosphere which one man carries about with him is communicated to another.

Gabriel had not been so disturbed for many years as he was to-night. The cold air of suspicion surrounded him and chilled him, though not a word had been spoken, and there was nothing tangible to rest a fear upon. Until to-night he had never been in the neighbourhood of suspicion, and, voiceless as it was, it reached him. A heavy sense of impending mischief hung upon him, and he tried to shake it off in vain. He reasoned with himself, but presentiments are outside the range of reason, and for a little while he fell into a sort of waking nightmare. The mood wore itself out, and before he had been an hour alone he was fairly tranquil and self-possessed again. But his night was broken by dreams, and from some prodigious distance a threatening hand seemed to

approach him with such an awful slowness that it seemed as if a very eternity of time must pass before it reached him, though its grasp could hardly be more dreadful than the fear of it.

Dick and the Major sat and chatted until near midnight, when they also retired. Morton had contrived, after Gabriel's disappearance, to regain his customary manner, and so well succeeded in disguising his discomforts that his companion had no suspicion of them. But when he reached the bedroom which had been assigned to him for the night, he threw open the window, and, leaning out with his arms upon the sill, he surrendered himself to thoughts and fancies which were by no means agreeable. The night, though dark (for the moon had not yet risen), was warm and richly perfumed; and the Major, kneeling upon a chair before the window, and leaning with head and shoulders in the open air, fell in the midst of his perplexities into a doze. His perplexities accompanied him, and under the impression that he was thinking them out with exceeding perspicacity, he dropped into a profound slumber, which he endured for an hour or so.

He awoke suddenly at a rustling sound, and being one of those who pass from sleeping to waking at a bound (as most men do who have been accustomed to dangerous and adventurous lives), he was in full possession of all his faculties in an instant. The moon by this time had risen. For half a score of yards, or thereabouts, the shadow of the house lay dark before

him; but beyond that space everything was illumined. He saw but dimly at first, but when he had searched for and had found his eye-glass, he discovered, not far beyond the broad line of shadow cast by the building, the figure of a man who stood half hidden behind a laurel-bush.

This figure, without actually crouching, stooped a little, as though the man had an instinct to make himself small, to escape the chance of observation. Just as Morton sighted the man, he moved, and the rustling sound which had awakened the sleeper was repeated. The laurel now obscured him altogether, and the Major waited for a full half minute before he again caught sight of him. He felt that he had no need to be profoundly suspicious by nature to attribute to this person some intent not altogether honest. If he had been familiar with the house, he would probably have descended, and have, at least, attempted a capture. But, as it was, he could think of nothing better than to address the suspicious stranger. He did this in a mildly conversational tone, which was almost conciliatory in its blandness.

'Hullo! You there!' said the Major. 'What is your little game, sir?'

The man cast a startled glance in his direction; and, turning, ran like the wind. He sped so wildly that his haste betrayed him; and in crashing through a line of rhododendrons he tangled his feet, and fell heavily; but recovering himself, he raced on again

until he reached the wall, which he mounted with great agility, and, dropping on the other side, disappeared from view. The Major heard his racing footsteps in the lane, and listened until they died away in the distance.

This small episode discomfited him curiously, for he could not rid himself of the belief that he had recognised the man whom he had seen, but for an instant, that evening in colloquy with Sullivan.

XV.

There are thousands of passably brave people who are experimentally aware that fears which are barely supportable in the night-time, vanish with the coming of the day. When Gabriel Kenyon awoke, at the entrance of his quiet and well-conditioned servant, and the man drew aside the curtains and pulled up the blinds, the warm summer sunlight, already lying broadcast about the landscape, seemed at once to banish the troubles which had haunted him in sleep. The cause of his fears had been altogether too shadowy to endure; and, as he dressed, he wondered a little at himself for having been touched by it at all.

In a little while his thoughts passed to what seemed a more substantial trouble. It was not strange that, with the abnormal training he had given himself, he should have grown profoundly superstitious. It had been a habit with him, in the days when he was first becoming persuaded of his own regeneration and pardon, to make the decision of his puppet Providence hang upon any little trifle. The unexpected submission of a quarrelsome tenant with a turn for litigation

—the passing of a cloud from the landscape—the very flight of a bird from a bough—and a thousand other things as little bearing on his case, had been accepted by him as omens. In his more nervous times he played, as it were, at pitch and toss for his own soul; and, in the practice of the *sortes* (which was a favourite occupation of his) was elevated or depressed by the text he fell upon. And now he made the question of Lord Bagleigh's proposal to Helen, and her acceptance or non-acceptance of it, a test. If he were really and truly pardoned, Helen would consent; if he were not really and truly pardoned, but were yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, her refusal would be a sign to him.

He had played this self-tormenting game with everything that happened to him for years. He had put his doubts to the touch, finally and decisively, a hundred thousand times, at a moderate computation, in this wise; but, though they were always going to be settled for good and all, they had for a long time refused to be laid by this or any other process he could discover. As he gradually ceased to suffer, he ceased to repent; for in such a nature what is called repentance is but dislike of pain, pure and simple. He had been able readily to forgive himself, and having forgiven himself, had been able to believe that he was forgiven. But even when he had settled down into his own most stolid and fixed self-approval, he was liable to be shaken from it at any moment by any and

every little wind of circumstance. It was half-a-dozen years since his balance had been so completely disarranged as it began to be now. The fear of detection from outside had been absurd, but it had left him newly prone to his old spiritual qualms.

In his inmost heart he was rather relieved to have come to this conclusion about the Bagleigh episode, because he desired the match; and his new view of the proposal left him conscience-free to do his best in order to secure it.

To unravel and to reel up into orderly narrative the spider's-web sophistries he constantly and hourly spun for himself would be tedious, if it were possible; but this much may be taken as an indication.

It was his habit in fine weather to walk for half an hour before breakfast, and this exercise was generally taken in his own grounds. This morning, being wishful to be left alone with his thoughts, he passed through the gate and walked towards the village, where an occasional nod of urbane condescension was all that was expected of him in the way of social intercourse.

It may have been an active factor in the formation of the local opinion about him that he permitted himself none of those relaxations in attire which are customary with English gentlemen. Nobody had ever seen Mr. Kenyon, since he took up his residence at the Lodge, in morning tweeds. The local rustic imagination would have failed to picture him as he would

have appeared in a round hat and a shooting-jacket. He was invariably dressed in black. A frock-coat, cut somewhat long, in a rather antique but prodigiously respectable style; a glossy hat, rather unusually broad in the brim, and having something of an ecclesiastical, or even episcopal, suggestion in its form; high collars, of the shape which had been fashionable in his youth; a satin stock, the shining buckle of which showed behind his neck as he stooped in walking; black gloves, which were always tight and new and glossy — all these things, in conjunction with his staid walk and the studied deliberation and suavity of his address, helped to mark him in the minds of his less important neighbours. They indicated respectability of the highest and solidest sort; they even indicated goodness.

He was getting on in years now, and, what with his age and his troubles, his hair had grown to a silver whiteness. His scrupulously-shaven face had a delicate but not unhealthy pallor. He walked slowly, with his hands behind his back, or held in front of him as he toyed with his gold-rimmed pincenez. It would be hard to picture a more respectable figure than he presented as he passed slowly down the village street, returning here and there the salutations with which he was greeted.

Auguste Moreau had never seemed more profoundly and securely buried than at the hour which heralded his resurrection.

At the doorway of the village hotel, Mr. Kenyon discerned a stranger of unmistakably foreign aspect. He was dressed coarsely and cheaply, and he carried his fineries with an almost ferocious swagger. Mr. Kenyon gave him a condescendingly polite 'Good-morning,' being always willing to impress by his urbanity.

The foreign stranger raised his hat, and responded to his salutation with a marked accent. Gabriel passed on, not displeased at the impression his aspect had evidently produced upon the foreign person. Gustave Peltzer stared after him, and no more associated him with Auguste Moreau than with the man in the moon.

But a small bald man, who stood bare-headed within the doorway, felt the palms of his hands suddenly hot and moist, and rubbed them together with a feeble groan as the unconscious quarry and the unrecognising huntsman saluted each other.

'What ails you, mon bon?' cried the swaggering foreigner turning at the sound, and looking in at the doorway.

'Rien,' responded the poor Sullivan miserably, 'rien de tout.'

'Order for me,' said Peltzer, 'a little glass of brandy, and pay for it. It is well you came here. This scoundrel of a patron here demands to be paid for all things before they are served, because I am without baggage. By-and-by, my friend, I will affront him

with the sight of more money than he ever saw before.'

Sullivan rubbed his baldness pensively, waggled his head, and tried to smile; but his attempt to recall his old self was a failure, and he went off dismally to order the brandy the imperious Peltzer had demanded.

Meanwhile, Gabriel pursued his way in the odour of respectability, and savoured with an even unusual relish the marks of respect and consideration with which he was greeted. He pondered as he went, and dwelt particularly on the folly of which he had been guilty in throwing an inviting and attractive young man so prominently in the way of an impressionable girl.

It would, no doubt, have been possible to dismiss Douglas; but he matured the plan by which, without departing in any way from the strictest lines of veracity, he could enable himself in the course of a day or two to announce imperative business which would take himself and Helen away from Perry Haughton, and he promised himself that until the girl should be safely married she should no more be placed in the way of ineligible young gentlemen. The thing became of infinite importance to him, for nothing less than success with Bagleigh and with Helen could convince him of his own safety. The fact that he had in like manner been convinced of his safety beforehand, and convinced of the impossibility

of safety, had no weight with him. His tests had always been, by virtue of that power of self-deception which made him what he was, matters of the most urgent moment with him.

With all his thoughts to absorb him, he was not less punctual than usual. He appeared at the breakfast-table at the stroke of nine, and took his seat there. Douglas had already introduced the Major to Helen, and the quartette sat down in a rather unsocial silence. Morton was still exercised by his own particular problem. Douglas was a little puzzled and disturbed by his old comrade's manner. Gabriel was sunk deep in the consideration of his test and its chances; and Helen was thus left with nobody to talk to her who did not give her cross questions or crooked answers.

In the middle of the repast, the venerable Partridge toddled in with the post-bag. Gabriel unlocked it, discovered there two or three letters addressed to his niece and one to Douglas, together with some ten or a dozen directed to himself. He threw these down, after sorting them from the others, and the Major, on whose side of the table he laid them, saw at the top of the little pile the broad superscription of Sullivan's letter. It fascinated him, and his talk began to go altogether at random. In answer to Douglas, he said one or two things so manifestly inappropriate and absurd, that even Gabriel came out of his preoccupation to stare at him.

The Major noticed the sensation he produced, and made a strenous effort to command himself.

Kenyon showed no disposition to hurry over the reading of his correspondence. He pushed the letters about with the tips of his fingers, looking idly at the address of one and the seal of another, and then continued his breakfast.

Sullivan's letter was now more than half-way hidden from the Major's gaze, but whether he looked at it or no, he was forced to read its contents over and over again, and the very flourishes of the capitals and finals were clearly before him.

It seemed an age before Gabriel had finished his frugal breakfast; but at last he rose, took up his letters in both hands, nodded round in a casual manner, and withdrew, to the Major's momentary but prodigious relief, to the library.

Here he seated himself at a knee-table which stood in the recess of a bow-window looking upon the lawn. He laid the letters down before him, and, drumming on the table with his fingers, sat thinking out the Bagleigh Providence test until he had brought himself to believe that he was fairly certain of success in it. Then he began to open his letters, turning each one round before he broke the envelope, and making elaborate use of his delicate fingers in the manipulation of them.

Sullivan's epistle lay about half-way down. The plain blue business envelope and the broad clerk-like

handwriting naturally told him nothing. He opened the letter with no sense of premonition of its contents; but the first words upon which his eye lighted brought him to his feet. He stood for a moment quite dazed and sick, and slowly and automatically re-seating himself, he tried to read. He had so far seen nothing but the name of his cousin Robert's murderer, and, what with the sick singing in his head, the sudden film before his eyes, and the way in which the paper shook in his trembling fingers, he could make out nothing more. At last he held the letter resolutely down upon the desk before him with both hands, and poring on it with a dreadful eagerness, mastered its contents. His face was of the colour of lead, and he began to quake from head to foot, as though he had been struck suddenly with palsy.

Horribly as the letter affected him, he seemed at first to have no comprehension of it. He was like a man hit by a bludgeon, who is too much stunned to know for the moment what has happened to him. But when the first ghastly terror of the shock had passed away, he re-read the letter, and saw that his dead-and-buried secret was alive and abroad again. When once his mind began to clear, he grappled with he phantom desperately, and struggled with it with ll his might. The letter, in spite of its purposed mbiguity, was clearer than the day. His identity with Auguste Moreau was known. Moreau's crime was known.

But the letter offered help. Since the Major had read it, Sullivan had added a postscript to the effect that, if it were worth Mr. Kenyon's while to see him, he would be found, at the time at which this letter would be delivered, at the village hotel. There could be no object in the writer's mind in this, thought Gabriel, but the levying of black-mail. Well, there was little in the way of black-mail which he was not prepared to pay. He knew that he could be forced to part with anything rather than have his secret known.

He had scarcely come to this conclusion when a sort of blind, wild, fighting instinct welled up in him, and surprised him by its vigour and intensity. He would yield what must needs be yielded; but he would save himself at any hazard, and at least he would face this phantom fighting.

To a man agitated by such thoughts as these, physical motion was a necessity; and he paced up and down the room until his quickened pulses and his unexpected fighting instinct so inspired him that he was able to sit down and write. The handwriting was hurried and disordered, and had little resemblance to his usual characters, which were peculiarly small, neat, and cruel. In effect, the letter briefly informed Mr. Sullivan that Mr. Kenyon was at home, and would see him at once. When it was written, enveloped, and addressed, Gabriel stood for a minute to recover a semblance of tranquillity, and then ringing

the bell, directed the man who answered it to the Railway Arms, with instructions to ask for an immediate answer. The servant took the letter, noticing nothing unusual in his employer's demeanour; and Gabriel, walking up and down the library, resigned himself to wait.

Conscience naturally enough, was altogether dormant, and lay quiet. She had no voice in this matter. Here was a real danger to be faced—a danger which could only be confronted with a real weapon in the hand.

Whilst he waited, he shot conjecture far and wide. Who was the man who threatened him? How had he come to know anything which should enable him to threaten? And why had he himself been allowed to live all these years in prosperity and peace? None of these questions were answerable until the man appeared; but they kept up a clamour of anguished astonishment within him, and were as exigent as the very desire of safety itself.

He walked faster and faster up and down the room in his excitement, and the motion gave him courage. It was all so long ago. He was so firmly established in respectability. He had for years borne a character so unblemished that the idea of charging him with such a crime must needs seem preposterous. He got up within his own mind a sort of blustering disdain at it. Was it possible that a man of his position, of his family, of his reputation for goodness, could be assailed

by such a charge? Then this high-soaring braggadocio was pierced through and through with fear, and fell to the ground like lead. What had been, had been. The thing was done; there was no undoing it. If it were proved against him, if it could be proved against him, in spite of his repentance, in spite of the sanctity and benevolence of his life, in spite of that charming understanding with Providence that he had long arrived at, he would be tried, sentenced, and hanged—he, Gabriel Kenyon.

When he had reached to this conclusion, and had begun to feel an hysteric rebellion at it as being altogether unjust and horrible, the man whom he had despatched to the Railway Arms returned to say that the person who had been sent for was in attendance.

'Let him come in when I ring,' said Gabriel. The walls of his body seemed to surround a vacuum, and he was cold, and a little inclined to be sick. He was an abstemious man, as a rule, but he longed for a stimulant, and nothing kept him back from calling for it but the knowledge that the summons would bring in his visitor. He made a prodigious effort to recover his self-control, and having drawn his chair away from the clear light of the window, he sank into it, and laid a hand upon the bell-pull. He sat thus for a minute before he found courage to ring, and when at last he did so he sounded an unusually agitated and noisy peal. This brought in Mr. Sullivan, who advanced a few steps into the room and there paused,

looking much less like a man who was about to accuse another than a man about to be accused.

Gabriel, fixing his gold-rimmed pincenez with the trembling fingers of both hands, looked up at him, seeing nothing except that the man was there. What manner of man it was, his eyes refused to tell him.

He cleared his throat, and in a voice which, though rather unusually harsh and dry, was still so commonplace business-like that its sound encouraged him, he asked:

'Are you the person who addressed me yesterday, signing himself Cyrus Sullivan?'

'I had that pleasure,' Mr. Sullivan responded—'that honour.'

'What was your purpose in writing that letter?' Gabriel asked.

Cyrus murmured something, of which the words 'amicable understanding' were alone audible. Kenyon began to gather courage more and more.

'I must ask you to explain yourself,' he said, speaking pretty firmly now. 'What was your object in addressing this letter to me?'

'Well,' returned Mr. Sullivan, 'I thought you might take it in a friendly way. I thought it might be useful to you.'

This, though it was spoken with an extreme feebleness and humility, disconcerted Gabriel so profoundly that all his old symptoms came back again together, and he could find nothing to say in answer to it.

'You see, sir,' pursued Cyrus, who was almost as much frightened as Gabriel himself, 'that I am not the mover in this matter. If there should turn out to be anything against Mr. Moreau, I thought it might be worth while to put him on his guard.'

'Why should you come to me,' asked Gabriel, 'to speak of this man? Why, supposing that the man exists at all, should you imagine me to have an interest in him?'

'I suppose, sir,' said Cyrus tremulously, appearing to disregard this question, 'I suppose, sir, that you don't remember me.'

Gabriel looked towards him, and tried to make a study of his features.

'I do not remember,' he said hoarsely, 'that I ever encountered you before.'

'I had the pleasure,' said Cyrus, 'of travelling from Paris to London with Monsieur Moreau on the tenth day of January, in the year 1868.'

Gabriel's grey face went a tone greyer.

'After that,' pursued Sullivan, 'I had the pleasure of accompanying you by coach as far as Perry Haughton. You may remember that you alighted at the King and Constitution.'

The merest hint of Sullivan's habitual bird-like insolence of manner remained to him; but this was only because the fashions of a lifetime could not be thrown away in a moment.

As for Gabriel, he felt as though a net were being drawn inexorably about him.

'What induced you,' he asked, speaking with great difficulty, 'what induced you to follow me here?'

'I was instructed,' answered Sullivan, 'to follow Monsieur Moreau from Paris, and to find out where he went.'

'Well, sir,' cried Gabriel, with a ghastly attempt to bluster, 'what has Monsieur Moreau to do with me?'

'Oh, if you come to that, sir,' said Sullivan, 'I shall have to beg your pardon.'

Gabriel's faculty of fence deserted him altogether. He sat limp, and realized his destiny so forcibly that he was impelled to tug with the fingers of both hands at his collar, feeling as if it choked him. Sullivan, in spite of his own terror at the situation, began to grow a little bolder.

'I should like you to understand, sir,' he said, 'that I am not acting for myself.'

Gabriel rose from his seat, and holding by the back of an armchair, which stood near him, and swaying to and fro a little, spoke, with his eyes upon the ground.

'Who set you to watch this man Moreau?'

He knew that the pretence was practically futile, but he could not help employing it.

'A gentleman,' responded Sullivan, 'who lived in the same house with him. A gentleman who occupied the room above him.'

As if every day and hour and instant which stood

between him and his crime had vanished, Gabriel saw the shabby littered room, and the bed in the corner with the quiet figure on it. He could hear quite distinctly the sound of a muffled irregular breathing, and for the first time in his life he was able to localise it. It sounded from overhead.

'Who was the man?' he asked.

'His name,' said Sullivan, 'is Armand Camus, but he was known to you as Gustave Peltzer.'

'To me?' cried Gabriel. 'No man of that name was ever known to me.'

'He says,' rejoined Sullivan, 'that Monsieur Moreau, who was a doctor, knew him well, and attended him once when he broke his wrist.'

'You know this man?' asked Gabriel, still with his eyes upon the floor.

'Yes,' Cyrus answered.

'Where is he?'

'Here.'

'Do you mean in Perry Haughton?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You spoke in your letter,' said Gabriel desperately, feeling his way to meet what he knew must come at last, 'you spoke in your letter of a danger which threatened Monsieur Moreau. What is that danger?'

Now, Mr. Sullivan's sole acquaintance with murders had been made by a not very diligent study of the Newgate Calendar and an occasional tour through the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's Exhibition.

Gabriel Kenyon did not in the slightest degree answer to his conception of a murderer. The size of the house he owned and lived in, the eminent respectability of his attire, the very furniture of the apartment in which they stood, seemed to protest, to Cyrus's mind, against the supposition of his guilt. For this, and perhaps for one other reason, a little more flattering to himself, Cyrus felt the shadowy personality of Monsieur Moreau to be something of a shelter to him.

'You see, sir,' Cyrus answered, with a frightened amiability, 'if what Peltzer says is true, and Monsieur Moreau were caught, he would be hanged.'

Gabriel, still holding with one hand to the back of the chair before him, sent the fingers of the other nervously to his collar, where they tugged at it as if he felt a sudden tightness at the throat.

'He would be hanged?' said Gabriel.

'The affair, sir,' said Cyrus, 'happened in France, but it was'—he searched for a word, and only finding the one that came first, skipped over it as delicately as he could—'the affair was committed, sir, in France, but Monsieur Moreau was an English subject, and so was the other gentleman.'

'And now,' said Gabriel, 'what is your object in bringing this history to me?'

'Well, sir,' replied Sullivan, rubbing his hands together in a manner almost ingratiatory, 'if I had

not brought it, it might have been brought by another person in another way.'

'And you suppose me,' said Gabriel, still hiding himself behind that unavailing shelter which concealed no tremor of his inmost heart—'you suppose me to be interested in the affairs of Monsieur Moreau, and I presume you expect me to induce him to make some recognition of your desire to be of service to him.'

And here (almost as much to his own surprise as to Gabriel's) an unexpected trait declared itself to Mr. Sullivan.

'No,' he said, 'I don't. I could not touch a penny if I wanted bread.'

He spoke with vehemence, and, for the first time, naturally.

'What do you want, then?' Gabriel asked. 'Why do you come here?'

'I don't know why I came here,' responded Cyrus, 'except that that damned scoundrel gloated so, I couldn't bear to think of having had a hand in it. If you take my tip,' he added, 'you'll get from here as fast as you can get anything to carry you. He's got neither heart nor bowels. He'll bleed you to your last sixpence, and, as likely as not, when you're cleaned out he'll write to Scotland Yard.'

This was by no means what he had come prepared to say. The Major's shot had hit the mark, and Mr. Sullivan's primary intent to warn Mr. Gabriel was at

least tinctured by some hope of securing pecuniary benefit. But when he came to the point, he discovered that he was not of the stuff of which blackmailers for crime are made, and a sudden vivid horror of money got in that way took hold upon him. Besides this, the feeble little Cyrus, who had hardly ever kept a conscience in his life, and had long since ceased to trouble himself much about small scruples of any sort, felt it in his heart to be a deadly pity that so respectable seeming a personage as Gabriel Kenyon, living in such a house, and owning such a property, and such a reputation, should be submitted to the final pains and penalties of the law for a crime committed so long ago. He was not a statesman, he was not a moralist. His chief faults were that he lied and was lazy; his only virtue was that, in so far as he could be, he was harmlessly good-natured. He had begun an enterprise which was altogether too laborious for him, and he here abandoned it.

'If I could have got at you before,' he said, 'I would have given you the office earlier. But when I got down last night, I found that fellow here before me; and now, if what he's got to say is true, the best advice that anybody can give you is to cut and run, and leave him in the lurch. You don't know at any minute when he'll turn up; and if he once lays hold of you, he'll stick like a leech.'

Gabriel began helplessly to turn his eyes this way and that, and wore, suddenly, every sign which marks

a hunted creature. And whilst Sullivan was pressing him to lose no time, and he was casting here and there to guess what he might do to save himself from the threatened danger, something of a fracas arose in the hall outside, and a bullying voice was heard.

'Mais, mon ami, je le connais depuis longtemps. Nous sommes de vrais amis—de vieux amis! Laissez moi, donc! Où est-il, ce Monsieur Kenyon? Je voudrais bien l'embrasser, moi—son ancien camarade—le cœur de son cœur—l'âme de son âme!'

'I can't understand a word you're saying,' piped the voice of the ancient Partridge. 'You don't suppose that a fellow like you can force your way into a gentleman's house whether he will or no, and go where he wants to. If you don't go, I shall have to call the police.'

'Je n'ai pas peur de ça,' cried the voice outside. 'Je vous comprends, mon bon, parfaitement; malgré le fait que je ne parle pas Anglais. Mais laissez moi passer, ou je vous écraserai.'

'Thank God,' cried Gabriel Keynon piously, 'there is not a creature in the house who can understand him!'

But, at this instant, the voice of Major Morton broke in upon the mingled tones of Partridge and the intruder, demanding, in perfect French, to know the reason of the disturbance. At this, Gabriel cast both hands above his head.

'It's all over,' he said, 'all over!' and moving his hands with a dreadful writhing motion in the air—whilst Sullivan looked vainly about for a hiding-place—he fell at full length upon the floor.

XVI.

The Major had packed up his scanty traps to be gone, and was on his way to the hall with intent to seek out his host and bid him farewell, when the sound of Monsieur Peltzer's bullying voice was first heard.

'And here,' said the Major to himself (being in need of no very great penetration or swiftness to enable him at once to grasp the situation)—'here is Mr. Sullivan's partner.'

He stood on the stairs for a moment to survey Peltzer. That personage had obviously taken more cognac than was good for him, and he was so exalted at the prospect of being able to bully a man of Kenyon's social pretentions, and by his own conceptions of the wealth of the immediate future, that he shone all over with a swaggering complacency.

The Major had not had the pleasure of meeting Monsieur Peltzer until now, but he knew his kind, and when the intruder began to threaten the old butler, he thought it time to interfere.

'Come, come,' said the Major, descending the stairs, 'what is all this row about?'

Peltzer swaggered round upon him, and flourished off his hat, with an insolent leer of mock politeness.

'I have the honour,' said he, 'to be a dear and intimate old friend of Monsieur Kenyon's. His domestics refuse to introduce me to his presence.'

'You had better send in your name to Mr. Kenyon, and state your business,' said the Major quietly.

It was no affair of his. It promised to be an ugly business for all concerned in it. He had not the faintest desire to intrude into the secrets of Messieurs Peltzer and Kenyon, whom he was already disposed to regard in his own mind as a very fitting pair; but he had no sooner set eyes upon Peltzer and heard him speak than he experienced a vivid longing to see him soundly horsewhipped.

'But, my friend'—— said Peltzer, laying a hand upon the Major's shoulder.

'Take your hand away,' said the Major, interrupting him with little ceremony, and holding him at a distance with the point of his walking-cane.

'My friend,' said Peltzer, unabashed, 'I desire to give Monsieur Kenyon a little friendly surprise. I will go in and see him.'

It was certainly no affair of the Major's; but the

man's drunken insolence so angered him that he took upon himself to say:

'I can assure you, you will do nothing of the sort.'

'Are you a friend of Monsieur Kenyon's?' demanded Peltzer jeeringly.

The Major returned no answer, but addressing Partridge, asked him if there were no able-bodied menservants about the house.

'Half-a-dozen, sir,' said Partridge.

'Bring two of them,' said the Major.

'Bring twenty,' said Peltzer, who appeared to have understood the colloquy, though he made no pretence of speaking English. 'Are you a friend of Monsieur Kenyon's, sir?' he asked again; and again the Major disdained to answer him. 'If any friend of Monsieur Kenyon's,' said Peltzer, 'stays me from doing what I want to do, Monsieur Kenyon will not be grateful to him. Monsieur Kenyon would desire that I should have my way. You shall see us in half an hour's time from now, and you shall see how tenderly attached to me he is.'

'Listen to me, Monsieur Peltzer,' said the Major. He had no other object in calling the fellow by the only name by which he knew him than to use it as a sort of ceremonious mockery; but the effect the mention of the name produced was nothing less than remarkable. Monsieur Peltzer staggered back a pace his blotched countenance grew pale upon a sudden,

and for a second or two his eyes roved like those of a creature taken in a trap. 'My mention of your name surprised you, I observe, monsieur,' said the Major. 'You may not have supposed yourself known.' His instinctive antagonism to this vile bird of prey from the galleys was making a partisan of him. 'This is absolutely no business of mine,' he continued; 'but if you have anything to say to the master of this house, go outside, send in a statement of your business, and wait until you are sent for.'

At this moment a bell in the servants' quarter pealed wildly again and again and again; and Kenyon's valet, running hurriedly to answer this unusual summons, pushed past the Major with a hasty word of apology, and opened the library door. Almost at the same instant, Partridge appeared in the rear, with the groom and the gardener.

'Let anyone so much as lay a hand upon me,' cried Peltzer, 'and I will ruin the house! I demand to see this Kenyon—I insist!'

The position into which the Major had allowed himself to be hurried was by no means either agreeable or dignified. He had, as a matter of course, no shadow of authority in Kenyon's house, and no right to prevent any caller upon Kenyon from behaving as he pleased. If he had been but a little more intimate with his host of the moment, he would have felt his own position stronger. As it was, he saw that he had

done more than he had a right to do, and thought it time to effect a judicious retirement.

'This fellow,' he said to the men, 'is drunk, and is threatening your master.'

In face of this statement, the groom and the gardener waited for no instructions. There was a little scrimmage along the hall, the Major following with an air of languid interest: and at the end of it Monsieur Peltzer was ejected into the arms of Lord Bagleigh, who had at that moment alighted from his horse at the door.

The young nobleman, with his arms under those of the half-prostrate Peltzer, stared in sheer amazement at the Major and the servants. But Peltzer, struggling to his feet, and freeing himself from his Lordship's unconscious grasp, broke into maledictions.

'So,' cried Peltzer, waving his arms in mad gesticulation, 'you eject me from the house that I could ruin! You throw me out of the presence of this assassin, whom I could hang! I could hang him!—this Kenyon—I could hang him!'

'Oh! I say, come, look here, you know,' said Lord Bagleigh, addressing the Major, whom he recognised as the only gentleman in the group, 'this is pitching it too strong. I shall take it on myself to give this fellow in charge. Begad! I shall.'

The Major recognised his Lordship, though he had seen him but once before.

'He certainly deserves it,' he answered. 'I would have done it long ago if I had had authority.'

There was tumult outside the house, for Peltzer was raving and cursing, and the groom and the gardener were struggling with him to prevent him from re-entering; and inside, bells were ringing, and voices calling, and footsteps running here and there in strange confusion; but those outside the door were at present too much concerned with Peltzer to have eyes or ears for what was going on within.

'Do you hear me?' cried Peltzer, struggling between the gardener and the groom. 'I can hang him—the assassin! I will hang him like a dog! I tell you—you who throw me from his door—that I hold this Kenyon in my fingers, and can hang him like a dog!'

'Rather like a dog himself, begad!' said his Lordship, addressing the Major.

And, indeed, Peltzer, yelping and snarling, did look rather like a dog of the homeless and dangerous sort.

Over and over again, the Major had confessed this was no affair of his; and yet he felt relieved to notice that Bagleigh paid no heed whatever to Peltzer's asseverations of his power over Kenyon. To the young gentleman himself, they sounded like nothing more or less than the ravings of a lunatic.

'Mais, je dis, voyez-vous—vous êtes en rébotte; n'est-ce pas?' said his Lordship placidly to Peltzer.

At this, the bird of prey from the galleys began almost to scream with rage.

'Are you mad?' he cried. 'Do you think you are friends of this Kenyon? Bring me face to face with him! Let me see him! Do you think you serve his turn by driving me from his door?'

'Really, begad!' said his Lordship, 'I never heard anything like it! Take the man away. Take him to the police-station.'

The two men, glad enough to get the order, wheeled Peltzer round, and hurried him along the drive. He went, protesting vengeance, and struggling against his captors. But these were stalwart fellows, and, in a little while, they succeeded in getting him into a run; and Peltzer, whose habits were not conducive to vigour of body, was soon too much out of breath for invective.

The inhabitants of Perry Haughton paused, and turned in the street, or ran to doors and windows, as the foreigner was hurried along. But nobody had learned anything from him when he was incarcerated. He might have cried his dreadful secret from the house-tops of Perry Haughton. His foreign language surrounded him like a wall. He had no power to pierce it, and not a creature would have understood him.

XVII.

Whilst unusual things were happening within the walls of the Lodge, one of the most ordinary things in the world was happening just outside them; for there, in the quiet sunlit gardens, with the flowers blooming, and the birds singing about them in fit and pleasant accompaniment, a man and a maid were awaking broadly to the fact that they were falling in love with each other. As a matter of course, Dick Douglas was bound in honour to take no advantage whatever of the trust his host reposed in him. He could say nothing; but then, like the parrot famed in history, he could think a great deal: and thought in such condition has a knack of translating itself in a hundred ways without the help of speech. He and Helen had already been self-conscious enough in each other's presence, and had been forced to keep up an appearance of mere friendship by a constant gay raillery and flow of high spirits. But when Gabriel brought to the girl the first proposal of marriage which had been made to her, he did much towards making a woman of her. And now her self-consciousness was more

than ever awakened. The gardens were large enough for half-a-score pairs of lovers to hide themselves in, had they been so minded. There were shady alleys and trellis-covered walks, and bowery rustic seclusions by the dozen, and practically the two were as much alone as they could have been in a wilderness.

For the space of half an hour or so their conversation might have been listened to by anybody; but by-and-by it became, and almost in spite of themselves, a little more intimate.

'I shall have to go away in a day or two,' said Douglas.

The girl said nothing, but busied herself in disentangling a knot her idle fingers had made a moment or two before in the pendant cord from her parasol. This silence chilled him. It is noticeable that those signs which should be most encouraging to a lover, and which are in themselves the most broadly prophetic of success, are generally those which dash his hopes.

'I had a letter this morning,' he went on mournfully, 'from Begg and Batter, of Chancery Lane.'

'Who are they?' she asked.

'They are a very influential firm of solicitors,' said Douglas, 'and of course it's a great stroke of good fortune to find one's self applied to by them.'

'My uncle says,' said Helen, 'that you are likely to rise fast in your profession, Mr. Douglas.'

I shall try,' he answered, with that easy oblivion of

obstacles which is common to young men. 'As a matter of course, I ought to be very glad to be called to town on such business, but somehow I am afraid I shan't be.'

He wanted to say a great deal more than this, and if the positions had been reversed—if he had been walking about the stately grounds which were one day to be his own, and could have looked from where he stood on farm and farmstead which had been his father's before him, and must ultimately come to him, and if the girl had been, say, a governess, with no prospect but one of labour and of straightened means before her, he could have said all that was in his heart to say. Honourable poor men do sometimes make love to rich women; but there are few such obstacles to love as money.

'The moralists are very severe about idleness,' said Dick, not that he wanted to qualify what he had said before, but because her silence made it seem necessary to say something; 'and yet I must confess that I find it very pleasant.'

'If I were a man,' she answered, glad to find her feet upon firm ground again, 'I do not think I should like to be idle.'

'Not occasionally?' he asked.

'Perhaps occasionally,' she answered, with a little laugh, and somehow found the firm ground gliding from under her again.

'I am sorry to go,' said Douglas, resolute not to say

more than he ought to say. 'One cannot exchange all this for Chancery Lane and Fleet Street without a little reluctance.'

'No,' she answered, 'the country is pleasanter than London at this time of year.'

'Much,' said Douglas, rather forlornly, 'much pleasanter.' He had it in his mind to say that he could have forsaken the landscape for a dungeon under given circumstances with great joy, but he repressed himself heroically.

The silence began to be embarrassing; and, by-and-by, Helen, feeling that she had been cold about his going, ventured to say:

'We shall be sorry to lose you, Mr. Douglas.'

There are ways and ways of saying things; and the words might mean much or nothing. As she spoke them, they sounded like the iciest little bit of commonplace conceivable.

'One likes to think that one's friends are not absolutely glad to see the last of one,' said Douglas, making his tone as commonplace as hers.

'The last?' she answered, looking up at him with a smile of complete self-possession. And yet (if one may tell the truth about a girl's feelings in a case like this) she was so far from being self-possessed at the desolate prospect the words conveyed to her that the very light and warmth of the landscape seemed to die away as she spoke them. 'It would be a strange friendship that would delight in that.'

She felt as if this, in its boldness, were an almost awful thing to say.

'I suppose so,' the young fellow answered. 'I have enjoyed myself immensely,' he added, in the very tone he might have used if his companion had been of his own sex.

'I am afraid you have found us a little dull at times,' said Helen.

'Dull!' he said. 'Is Paradise dull? I have never been so happy in my life.'

Now, to be thirsty with a cooling draught at hand, and to long for that cooling draught and not touch it, is one thing; to put it to the lips, and, having tasted it, to set it down again, is another and a much more arduous business. Douglas—to follow out this original and striking metaphor—set the glass down, but did so with so keen an inward longing that he had never felt the like.

If the girl had spoken the truth she might have answered, 'Nor I, either.' But it is no recognised part of a girl's duty in such cases to tell the truth; and the earnest little quiver of conviction in her companion's voice frightened her.

Love's path is proverbially lined with roses, but the roses have their thorns.

There was nothing in the world which could have given her so much joy as to know that this penniless young barrister loved her; but if by a look or a tone

he so much as began to hint at it, she was afraid of him.

It is all a very old story, but delightful to linger upon. Little patches of sunlight on her dress, her hands, her hair, flickering illuminations of a cheek the colour of a rose-leaf, or an ear the colour of a shell, the white contour of throat and chin, the delicate and scarcely perceptible motions of the lips, thoughts that seemed to swim transparent in the candid beautiful grey eyes—the least of these things brought an aching sweetness to the lover's heart.

Never sunlight fell on anything half so precious as the little foot, the ungloved hand, the bronze hair it turned to gold, or the shell-like little ear. He would have kissed every sunfleck, had he dared. He would, had he dared, have knelt before her and adored.

A good little girl, a little prettier than the common run of good little girls in England, though that may be saying much, and he made a goddess of her, a creature of another sphere! And he, without being an altogether commonplace young man, can scarcely be supposed to have justified her estimate of him; for, to her mind, quite naturally, he was wise and learned beyond his years, and good and noble and handsome beyond belief.

They longed to tell each other of each other's perfections; he in his passionate male fashion, and she in her virginal and, as yet, passionless way.

The young man's declaration kept them both silent for a time. The girl walked on by his side, touched by numberless slight electric thrills, and tried so bravely to bring herself to order that when she spoke it was with a seeming of perfect indifference.

'And when do you think of leaving us, Mr. Douglas?'

'I am afraid I must go,' said Dick mournfully; 'that I must go to-morrow.'

'I suppose you find a pleasure in your work?' she said, not daring to give him even a momentary chance of sliding back to dangerous ground again.

'In part of it,' he said, rather disinterestedly.

Here they reached the limits of the garden, and, turning, saw the figure of the elderly Partridge at a distance. The old man moved at what was for him a very unusual pace, and made vigorous signs to some person who was invisible to Helen and her companion. He disappeared behind a stretch of trellised walk, and they forgot him, and strolled on towards the house.

'I hope,' said Douglas, in his lightest way, 'that I shall have some opportunity of seeing you in town, Miss Kenyon?'

'Oh, I hope so,' she exclaimed; 'but my uncle's feelings and prejudices are all against gaiety. Do you know, I have never been in London but once, and then to attend the May Meetings?'

'You found them gay?' asked Douglas, looking down at her with a momentary gleam.

'Not very,' she responded. 'I should have liked to stay for the season.'

'I wish,' said the lover, half eagerly and half humorously, 'that it were proper and possible for a young man to chaperon a young lady. I think you might find scenes in London which would be brighter than the May Meetings.'

If he had not been in love, he might have offered this harmless jest quite safely; but as it was, he began to thrill and tremble in the absurdest manner at the sweet and daring idea it conveyed to him. Oh, to have her to chaperon and guard—to show her the world—to give her whatever would make her happy—to have her under his wing where no one should have a right to come between them!

'Well, I am going away,' he went on, 'and the holiday's over. I shall think of Perry Haughton very often.'

She—catching at the meaning of his words and not at the words themselves—had just begun to say, 'So shall I,' but stopped at the second word in a little embarrassment.

'Shall you?—shall you?' cried he, not thinking of the words at all, but only of the thought. 'I've had a very happy time here—the happiest I ever had in my life.'

The glass was at his lips again, but he had once more to put it down. Perhaps, all things considered, he had said enough, possibly a good deal more than he had a right to say. This reflection sobered and saddened him, and the girl, of course, could say nothing.

They walked on towards the house, and whilst they were yet at a considerable distance from it, there broke upon the air the sound of M. Peltzer's later objurgations. His voice was clear enough, even at this distance, but, happily for themselves, neither of the young people understood his language. It would have been horrible to have been in the society of a lady within hearing of the language M. Peltzer chose to use, and Helen herself—though she could scarcely have been expected to understand much of it—would have been necessarily shocked by the threats and accusations hurled against her uncle. But the unexpected tumult in so retired a quarter—a place where everything was commonly so quiet—set the girl running to see what might be the matter, and Douglas followed her.

The storming, raging voice rose higher and higher as it went further away. And then, when both Douglas and the girl were running fast, the peal which Cyrus rang upon the library bell sounded in their ears.

All this was strange and alarming, and Helen,

putting herself to her best speed, ran into the hall by the lower entrance, and seeing two or three domestics with frightened faces clustered round the library-door, passed amongst them, sobbing for breath, and saw her uncle lying prone upon the floor, with his head supported by a stranger. Douglas, following closely, recognised the stranger, to his own amazement. A stout woman—the cook—was standing irresolute and frightened, with a carafe of water in one hand and a glass in the other. The unconscious Gabriel's head and face, and Sullivan's knees and hands, were all dripping.

'Ride off for a doctor, one of you!' cried the girl, panting. 'Quick! quick!'

At such a moment nothing was strange. It was no surprise to her to hear Bagleigh's voice behind her, speaking in tones of unusual decision and directness.

'Take my horse. He's standing outside.'

The girl ran to Gabriel, and Sullivan made way for her.

The rest entered the room, with the exception of the Major, who stood in the doorway, and, catching Sullivan's glance, summoned him silently with a beckoning forefinger. Sullivan obeyed the voiceless call and approached the Major, pale and terror-stricken.

Morton laid a hand upon his collar, and, gently

insinuating his fingers until he had secured a firm grasp, he marched the little man before him to the hall door, and on to the gravel drive before it.

'Now, you and I,' said he, 'are going to have a talk together.'

XVIII.

It has been said already that Mr. Sullivan found the task he had taken upon himself a heavier one than he had expected, but it had never felt so intolerable as now. The secret itself would have been enough to weigh him down; but Peltzer's nearness, the ghastly unlooked-for effect his communication had upon Kenyon, his fears on the one side and his sympathies on the other, drove him well-nigh distracted.

'You and I,' said the Major, 'are going to have a talk together.'

'I have left my hat inside the house,' responded Cyrus inconsequently. He had fallen into that condition of mind in which it is only bearable to think of trifles.

'Never mind your hat,' said the Major. 'Come with me.'

He released his captive, and by a gesture of the hand commanded him along the drive. Then, diverging to the left, he marched him across the

lawn to a summer arbour, where he motioned him to sit down.

'I suppose,' he began severely, 'that you are still under the impression that there may be something in this?'

'I am afraid there is,' answered Cyrus; 'I am afraid there is a good deal in it.'

'Now,' said Morton sternly, 'I shall advise you not to prevaricate with me. I shall offer one consideration for your acceptance which you seem to have overlooked. You come here for the purpose of extorting money from a man of high position by charging him with a crime. Are you aware, Mr. Sullivan, that by the English law any man who attempts to play that game becomes accessory to the crime, and may lay himself open to an equal punishment with the criminal?'

'You are quite wrong, Major Morton,' said the wretched Cyrus eagerly; 'I didn't come here for any such purpose. He offered me money this morning, and I told him I wouldn't take a penny if I wanted bread.'

'A liar,' said the Major, 'we can never trust, though he speak the thing that's true. But I shall be obliged if you will be as trustworthy as you can; and I may tell you that the less astonishing the things I hear from you may be, the more I shall be disposed to credit you.'

'I didn't,' cried Sullivan, 'upon my word and soul

I didn't! I did at first—I confess I did—but when I came down here, and found that scoundrel Peltzer in the place last night—if you had seen, sir, how he gloated over it——'

'And you repent?' said the Major. 'I am no great believer in sudden conversions.'

'So far as I'm concerned,' cried Sullivan, 'I've done with it! I've put him on his guard, and I've done with it! If I'm an accessory, Major Morton, you're another! You know as much as I do. It's no more my place to denounce him than it is yours.'

'I am not asking you to denounce him,' said the Major. 'I have said, until I am a little tired of saying it, that this is no affair of mine; but I have got a little way into it now, and I think I may as well go through with it.'

In the intervals he had made in the operation of packing his kit together that morning, Major Morton had looked, perhaps, half a dozen times out of the window. When he looked out for the first time he had seen Helen and Dick together on the lawn below.

The girl had not as yet begun to feel that sweet embarrassment which touched her later on, and she was laughing gaily in answer to some trivial jest of her companion's, when the Major looked at her. He was an old campaigner, and toughened against most of the assaults of the world. But, confirmed old bachelor though he was, he was by no means hardened against

the assaults of youth and beauty; and, seeing the fair little creature there in the sunshine looking so bright and happy and pretty that she seemed to have a native right to live in sunshine always, the Major's heart was more touched than he cared to confess.

The shadow of the house had fallen upon him, and he, the old campaigner, was running away from it. He was free to run away from it, and glad to do it, little as it touched him. But there was no running away from the shadow for her. If once it touched her, it must go with her wherever she went, and would never leave her until she fell into that deeper shadow which finally hides us all.

The Major had gone on with his packing, and had looked out a little later, and then he had seen the pair for a moment as they paused in their walk. The girl was looking down, and drawing patterns with the point of her parasol upon the ground. The lad was standing very near to her, and bending over her. A good lad and a stalwart, as the Major knew: honest, loyal-hearted, keen of feeling, quick to suffer. The shadow which threatened the girl would involve him also.

These reflections saddened the Major, and he tried to cast them off—for that was his manner of dealing with all sorts of troubles. But he could not help looking out from his window now and again, and whenever he saw the pair the reflections came

back upon him until they made him downright miserable.

He had seen no way of warding off the impending blow at that time; but now, with Peltzer got rid of for the moment, and Sullivan in his hands, he began to think he might possibly discover a parry for this stroke of Fate.

'I will tell you candidly, Mr. Sullivan,' he began, when he had paused for time to think things over, 'that it is my purpose to frighten you from any further share in this enterprise. I think I shall succeed in doing it.'

'I'm out of it already,' said Cyrus earnestly. 'I only want to get my hat and go.'

'It is very hard,' said the Major, 'in a case like this, to see where the whole of one's duty lies; but if I do not induce you and your brother-scoundrel to surrender your present devices, I will take it upon myself to blow the gaff on the whole rascally three of you.'

'For Heaven's sake, Major Morton,' Cyrus besought him, 'don't put me into it! I wish I had never had anything to do with it.'

'I wish you never had,' responded the Major drily. 'On your own showing, the French scoundrel could have done nothing without you.'

'He can't do anything without me now!' cried Mr. Sullivan.

For the first time since he had begun to look upon

this dark affair at all, a ray of light touched the Major's mind.

'Wait a bit,' he said; 'let me look at that.'

The more he looked at it, the more he saw how likely to be true it was. He walked to the door of the summer arbour, and walked cautiously around on every side; and then, returning, seated himself opposite to Sullivan, and, placing both elbows on the small table which divided them, he spoke in low and guarded tones.

'I have had the story from you piecemeal,' he began, 'and I hardly know how much of what you have told me I may believe; but see if you cannot contrive to tell the truth for once in your life. . . . Something was done—the thing we are concerned about—it's of no use to use ugly words—upon a certain day in Paris. Do you know the date?'

'The Tenth of January, Eighteen-sixty-eight,' said Sullivan, was the day on which I left Paris.'

'In pursuit? said the Major.

Sullivan nodded, and whispered, 'In pursuit.'

And you arrived,' pursued the Major, 'a week later, or thereabouts?' . . . 'The arrival here,' he said to himself, 'would confirm the French rascal's story.' . . 'Did the man you followed change his aspect much?' he asked, aloud. 'Did he attempt to disguise himself?'

He disguised himself completely,' answered Sullivan 'I never saw a greater change in a man.'

'How do you know that you followed the right man?' asked the Major.

'I knew that this morning,' Sullivan whispered, with a scared countenance, 'if I had never been sure of it before.'

Major Morton retired from the position he had attempted to hold, but instantly assumed another.

'Well, then,' said he, 'I presume I am justified in believing that you have had enough of this business?'

'Too much,' said Cyrus. 'I wish I had never touched it.'

'Very well,' said the Major. 'It does not matter much to you why I choose that the whole thing should be buried?'

'Oh dear no; not at all!' said Sullivan, with a tremulous readiness; 'not in the slightest degree, I assure you, Major Morton.'

'I may want your assistance,' Morton continued, 'in disposing of your brother rascal.'

'I think,' urged Sullivan, 'that you put it a little too severely against me.'

'It is natural for you to think so,' the Major answered; 'but that is not a question which stands in urgent need of discussion just at present. What do you know about this fellow?'

'He was at the galleys,' said Sullivan, 'for years, and I fancy he must have done something since.'

'That is satisfactory, so far as it goes,' said the

Major, 'but I should like to have it a little clearer. What do you fancy he has done since then?'

'I don't know what it is,' said Cyrus, 'but when I was fool enough to speak to him at Piaggi's restaurant, I called him by his name, and he was horribly frightened.'

'Um—m,' said the Major; 'I noticed the same thing myself this morning. It seems likely that a person of that name may be wanted.'

'I am sure he's wanted,' said Sullivan, 'and I wish'—the little man clasped his hands together, and wrung them hard—'I wish to Heaven the men who want him had him!'

'I think it probable,' said the Major, 'that your aspirations will be realized in the long-run. Take care, sir, that you do not fall into similar hands. I think you had best go now—the faster and the farther away the better.'

In obedience to this blunt dismissal Cyrus arose, and, accompanied by the Major, timidly re-entered the hall, secured his hat, bowed mildly, and went away, stared at by one or two domestics who lingered to await the arrival of the doctor. His presence was naturally associated in their minds with their master's sudden illness, but nobody dared question him. He returned to the hotel, and was there informed that his late companion was in custody, and, finding himself regarded with evident suspicion, he paid his bill, packed his effects in haste, and betook himself to the

railway station. There he awaited the train in a compound of uncomfortable emotions, and, being at last sluggishly borne away, vowed in his inmost heart to return no more to Perry Haughton.

Douglas had sighted the Major in the hall, and came forward to speak to him.

'This is a sad business,' he said. 'I am profoundly sorry for Miss Kenyon.'

'So am I,' Morton answered, with an air which Dick thought a little preoccupied and cold. But since the beginning of his visit to Perry Haughton, Morton had been utterly unlike the genial Major Dick had known of old, or, at the best, had only been himself by fits and starts.

'I cannot be of any use here,' said the Major, in the same dry and uninterested way; 'but I won't leave the village until I get news of the invalid. You had better stay where you are, and I will take a walk.'

He marched off, with apparent stolidity and inward tenderness, and his walk led him to the village police station, where he produced his card, and announced himself to the inspector as the guest of Mr. Kenyon.

'I believe you have a Frenchman here in charge?' he said; 'a man who was given into custody by Lord Bagleigh for creating a disturbance at the Lodge.'

'Yes, sir,' said the inspector; 'and he's made a pretty tidy disturbance here since we've had the care of him. He's only just begun to quiet down a little now; but

there's nobody here can make out a word he has to say for himself.'

'I should like to see the man,' said the Major, 'if I may.'

'Why, certainly, sir,' the inspector answered—for a guest of Mr. Gabriel Kenyon's was likely to have his wishes attended to here as almost anywhere else in Perry Haughton—'but you'd better have a couple of men with you, for he's a teaser—if I make myself understood, sir.'

'Give me one man,' said the Major, 'if you think it necessary.'

The inspector, answering with alacrity that he would accompany the visitor himself, marshalled him to the cells. They were only two in number, for Perry Haughton was not rich in criminals, and an infrequent poacher, an occasional drunk and disorderly on a Saturday night, or at the village fair time were, save on the rarest occasions, the only candidates for justice.

The inspector slid a key into the lock, and threw open the door, revealing the figure of M. Peltzer, who sat scowling and gnawing his nails in a corner.

'Oho!' said he, rising to his feet, as he beheld the Major. 'It is you again.'

'Yes, Monsieur Gustave Peltzer, it is I,' returned the Major, with great tranquillity.

He moved inside the cell. The inspector followed, and closed the door with a click behind him.

'Who are you?' said Peltzer, scowling at him with a face newly pale at this second mention of the name he dreaded; 'and what do you want here?'

'I have the honour,' said the Major, very suavely, 'of being an intimate friend of M. le Colonel Tricot.' The prisoner grew a little paler, and gnawed his nails, with a wicked, sideway look at his interlocutor. 'Now,' continued the old campaigner, 'you will agree with me that if I were to send a telegraphic despatch to my friend in Paris, apprising him of the fact that Gustave Peltzer is in custody at Perry Haughton, it would be an extremely unpleasant thing for you.'

Peltzer said nothing; but, still gnawing at his finger-nails, leaned his back against the wall, threw one leg over the other, and rolled his shoulders in defiance.

'Now if,' pursued the Major, 'I leave this cell without a promise on your part that you will go away in quiet, I shall send that telegraphic despatch at once, and you will wait here until such time as you are made over to the French authorities.'

In the course of his walk towards the station, Morton had well considered that if this first shot should fail to hit the mark he had yet arrows enough in his quiver to bring M. Peltzer down.

Peltzer changed the position of his feet and hands, but went on gnawing and staring savagely sideways at his visitor.

'You understand that?' Morton asked him quietly.

'Death of my life!' broke out Peltzer wildly.

'What am I? I am a leaf for every wind to blow about.'

After this poetic outburst he resumed the seat he had occupied at the inspector's entrance, and glowered sullenly upon the floor.

'My time is of value,' said the Major, 'and I ask you to decide. Do you go, or do I wire to Paris?'

'I will go,' said Peltzer.

'Very well,' Morton answered; 'you will go when you are allowed to go. But I have one or two things to tell you before we part. Any attempt on your side to extort money will be met by an immediate telegram to Paris. If you think to frighten us you will have to stand your trial as an accessory after the fact. Your extensive experience in criminal jurisprudence will no doubt tell you what that means. And you well remember that you can prove nothing until you prove that you are Gustave Peltzer. You observe—for I should like to enforce a lesson even upon such a fool as you are—that you have played a stupid game.'

'Am I free?" said Peltzer, rising.

'I believe not,' the Major answered. 'Remember,' he added, half turning his back upon the lowering scoundrel, 'a word from you and a telegraphic line from me.'

'And remember,' Peltzer retorted, 'a word from you, and then the whole accursed history from me.'

'Perfectly,' replied the Major; 'a clear bargain. Thank you, Mr. Inspector.'

'He seems to have sobered down a bit since he came in,' said the inspector, as he and the Major left the cell together.

'He had been drinking this morning,' said the Major, 'and has had time to recover himself a little.'

'It's a rare good gift, and very valuable, sir,' observed the inspector, 'to have the power of languages. There was a time in my history, sir, when I could have put on to my income, ah! pretty nearly five-and-twenty shillings a week, I should say, if I had only been able to speak French.'

The Major allowed that the accomplishment was a useful one, said 'Good-day' to the inspector, and strolled towards the Lodge, a little disposed to be triumphant, and very much disposed to be self-accusing and depressed.

'What am I doing?' he asked himself. 'I am compounding a felony, I am sheltering a murderer, and helping him to live in the odour of sanctity. Why should I have meddled or made in the business at all? It was no affair of mine.'

But then he thought of the girl, and took comfort from the reflection that he had diverted from her path the shadow that threatened to fall upon it.

'One most take the rough with the smooth, I suppose,' said the Major, making an effort to be philosophical. 'One may sometimes refrain from striking a scoundrel in order not to beat the inoffensive, and who am I that I should think myself en-

titled to yearn after pure and abstract justice? I never got it for myself, thank God!'

So he went on a little comforted, though still unable to approve of himself.

At the Lodge the news ran that Mr. Kenyon had recovered consciousness, had been seen by the doctor, and had been ordered rest and quiet.

Helen pressed the old campaigner to stay until the morning.

'Mr. Douglas is compelled to leave us for London to-morrow, and he would be glad of his old friend for a travelling companion.'

Helen had heard much of the Major, and though he had by no means come up to those conceptions of himself which Dick's enthusiastic description had created, the girl was disposed to be loyal to her lover's idea of his friend, and was prepared to find all manner of good qualities in him.

Morton accepted her invitation, though it went much against the grain with him to stay under the same roof with Kenyon, for whom, even apart from what he knew of him, he had conceived a mortal aversion.

He kept a good deal out of the way of the young people, and left Dick to the necessary work of support and consolation whilst he strolled about the gardens and wondered to find himself pitchforked into the middle of so strange a history.

Bagleigh had lingered to hear the news, and, learn-

ing that there was no immediate danger to be dreaded, had ridden away again.

The lovers were left to themselves, and made a great deal of progress, though the catastrophe of the day kept Douglas from further incursions into the land of actual love-making. It would have been quite base to take advantage of so mournful a circumstance as had befallen the household, and besides this, he had an unaffected liking for Kenyon, and he was sorry for his illness.

On the morrow Gabriel was still too unwell to see his guests, and Dick and the Major went to London without taking personal leave of him. The younger man took what he felt to be a clandestine advantage of the situation, and had the grace to be ashamed of it whilst he took it.

'I trust,' he said, blushing at his own duplicity, in spite of all he could do, 'I trust, if I can manage to get away from town for a day next week, that I may be allowed to run down and see how Mr. Kenyon is getting on?'

'We should think it very kind of you,' Helen answered, shyer in look than common in these parting moments, 'if you took so much trouble.'

XIX.

And now, indeed, evil times had descended upon Gabriel Kenyon. A criminal, of all men, stands in need of courage, though he is pretty generally a criminal because he is a coward. Courage and crime do occasionally travel together, though rarely. There are some virtues which are easily transmuted into vices by temptation, but courage is not one of them.

Gabriel was a coward confessed; and yet had he possessed courage enough to stock a dozen hearts he would have had need of all of it.

When he recovered from his swoon, he awoke to the immediate memory of what had gone before it. For aught he knew he had been denounced already; or, for aught he knew, the man whose voice he had heard was still waiting to denounce him. He dared not ask a question for his life, or give a hint of the terror which weighed upon his soul.

The doctor had left behind him injunctions, imparted in an unctuous whisper which the patient had

clearly overheard, that Mr. Kenyon was on no account to be subjected to annoyance.

This tasted at once bitter and mawkish to the patient's palate. Annoyance! Could anything more feebly touch the state he lay in? Annoyance was to be avoided, and he lay suffering all possible torments and dread.

He lay all day and suffered; he lay all night and suffered; there was nothing else to do. In the whole wide gamut of the ghostly noises of the night, no note sounded that did not wring his soul with fear. Every whisper of the trees, every murmur of the summer wind, laid a hand of unspeakable terror upon his spirit.

He lay and watched the dim and narrow circle of light cast by the night-lamp, and listened with all his ears, and shrank and shuddered in all his craven heart.

If he could have foreseen this years ago, he might have foregone his crime. He thought so now, at least, and strove to hide himself in his own crevices, whilst he protested inwardly how truly he had long repented.

A dog would have been ashamed to propitiate an angry master as he tried by outcry, adulation, and fawning to propitiate Providence.

The doctor came in the morning.

'If there are any exciting causes, my dear sir, we

must not consider them. We must study to preserve our tranquillity.'

Gabriel could have groaned aloud, and would have done it but for his ever-present fear of betraying himself. In one respect in the midst of all his cowardice he conducted himself like a hero. He repressed all signs of fear.

If by any superhuman chance his enemy were here or near no longer, his one possibility of escaping detection lay in quiet. He knew this hope to be as wild, and in his own heart thought it to be as groundless, as anything he could imagine, but it came sometimes, and he welcomed it and gave it shelter.

Then he settled to the belief that the doctor's authority was strong enough, whilst he continued in his present state, to ward off intruders, even when they were so pressing as Monsieur Peltzer had proved himself to be.

He yearned to make inquiries, and so to put an end to a suspense which, as he told himself, was more unbearable than any certainty; but he preferred the suspense to the certainty he dreaded, and so lay still and suffered his miseries as best he might.

Helen was constant in her attendance upon him, and he took the trouble of her face, which was little more than a reflection of his own, for a sign that things were ill outside. But on the third day, as he

lay groping about in his mind for some safe way of putting his problem to the test, she entered and sat beside his bed, laying her hand upon one of his own which lay outside the coverlet, and gently stroking it.

'You look troubled, darling,' he said, rolling his hollow eyes upon her. He was strangely altered, and bore little resemblance to the hale and hearty man he had been so short a time before. 'You look troubled, darling.'

'I *am* troubled,' she responded, still fondling his hand.

Surely, he thought, if anything were spoken or suspected yet, she could never seem so kind.

'For me?' he asked.

'Why, for what else should I be troubled, dear?' she asked him in return.

'There is nothing else to trouble you?

'Nothing,' she said.

'Nothing but my illness?'

She thought him fanciful, perhaps a little inclined to wander in his wits.

'No, nothing but your illness, uncle. What else should there be?'

'What, indeed?' he answered, and tried to smile, with such a ghastly ill-success that he half frightened her. 'Nothing outside my illness?'

'No, dear, no! Nothing in the world.'

'You are quite sure?' he pressed her, growing a

very little bolder, but rolling his greatened eyes about the chamber to make sure that they were alone.

'Quite sure,' she answered.

He sank back with a sigh of relief, which Helen could not understand.

She sat then stroking his flaccid fingers, until at length he fell asleep.

He had feigned sleep often (for of all things needful, he must look calm, in case the worst should come to the worst, and he should have to stand against the world); but he slept now for the first time since he had awakened from the swoon into which his fear of detection had thrown him.

Exhausted nature would have it so at last, and though the girl's ignorance of the fear which overhung him could hardly be expected to endure, it was enough to know that the expected mischief was not overtly threatened every moment.

Chroniclers of the Times of Cruelty, which are so curiously near our own, and look so far away from us and so impossible in this century of sentiment—have recorded that prisoners on the rack have slept in the intervals of their torture. Gabriel slept in the same sort of transient peace, and awoke to the same kind of torment.

It was not now as it had been when he had lain in the best bedroom of the King and Constitution. Then, though his illness was the cause of a good deal

of gossip and speculation, he was left pretty severely to himself; but now he was a person of consideration in the county, and the county people came to see him, or, failing that, made kind inquiry about him. Few people liked him very much, but he was universally respected.

Some made inquiries, naturally enough, as to the way in which the attack had befallen him. These learned that Mr. Kenyon was in his library at the time with a lawyer's clerk from London. Somebody, probably the ancient Partridge, had suggested that Cyrus was a lawyer's clerk. Nobody quite knew how the thing was supposed to be known, and everybody took it for granted.

There was no reason to believe that Mr. Kenyon had received disquieting intelligence. One or two inquirers, who learned that the lawyer's clerk had been seen in company, at the hotel, with the blackguard Frenchman who had created so unwonted a disturbance at the Lodge during his visit, put two and two together, and succeeded in making nothing at all out of the combination.

As a matter of course, on the surface of things there was no ground for suspicion of any sort. A most respected and valuable member of the community had had a fainting fit and lay ill after it, and that was all.

But Gabriel suspected everything and everybody. To his mind it came natural to think that every caller

had a special purpose in calling. The whole world watched him, and waited for the downfall, which, as it seemed, must come. Still, he heard nothing, and the silence was very dreadful to endure.

Bagleigh called daily, and once secured a momentary interview with Helen. The young nobleman was peculiarly embarrassed; and the girl, who had always hitherto been cordial with him, was distinctly cool in her demeanour.

'I'm awfully sorry,' said Bagleigh, 'that I forgot that fellow, Miss Kenyon.'

Helen looked inquiry.

'That fellow,' pursued his Lordship, 'who came here and made a row the day Mr. Kenyon was taken ill, you know? I forgot all about him.'

'I suppose,' said Helen, 'that that was the wisest thing to do.'

'That's really very smart,' returned his Lordship; 'but, as a matter of fact, don't you know, Miss Kenyon, it was not.'

'Why?' she asked.

'Well, you see,' replied his Lordship, 'I took upon myself to give him into custody. He was making no end of a row outside, and, even though I didn't know Mr. Kenyon was ill at the time, there was nobody else about to do it.'

He seemed uncertain and discomfited within himself, she thought, and, so far as she could safely do it, she was anxious to put him at his ease.

'I had not heard of it before,' she said; 'but I think you did quite rightly.'

'Well, you see,' said Bagleigh, 'I ought to have gone and appeared against him at the Petty Sessions yesterday, but I forgot all about him, and, because I was not there to prosecute, they let the beggar off.'

'Well,' said Helen, 'I am not sorry for that. The poor man,' she added, with an air of wisdom, 'would have had time to get sober.'

'Sets a bad example,' said his Lordship. 'Have fellows going round to all the houses in the country making rows.'

At about this point in the conversation feminine tact and instinct began to discover certain signs in Bagleigh's demeanour which indicated a desire to approach a topic which Helen had decided should be approached no more.

'I must ask you to excuse me now,' she said. 'My uncle is not happy if I am long away from him.'

'No, by George!' ejaculated his Lordship, seizing the conversational chance with unexpected agility, 'I should say he wasn't. I'm not myself—begad, I'm not! No, I say, really Miss Kenyon, you mustn't go. I've something to say, and—don't you know?—I'm bound to say it.'

He was very obviously in earnest, and the girl was rather sorry for him. They had been too closely

associated nearly all her life for her to mark very clearly or keenly the oddities and absurdities which were manifest to the eye of the casual observer, and she was disposed, after a certain fashion, to esteem him.

It goes without saying that she was not sorry for him because he could not marry herself (for a girl naturally thinks the love pains of anybody but the favoured lover a trifle ridiculous); but she was sorry for his embarrassment and confusion; and, since his Lordship displayed such unwonted fire in the middle of it all, she thought it best to let him have his trouble over.

She waited, therefore, prepared to listen and to answer.

'I want to know,' he began again, floundering somewhat, now that his protest had succeeded, and he had secured her attention, 'I want to know, Miss Kenyon, if your uncle has said anything particular to you within the last day or two?'

'About yourself?' she asked.

'Yes,' said his Lordship; 'about me.'

'My uncle has spoken to me.'

'Well, now,' said Bagleigh nervously, 'what have you got to say to it?'

'Lord Bagleigh,' she returned, and the young man's spirits fell at once to zero, for she never addressed him so, unless she were angry with him, 'I must ask you never to allude to that matter again.'

'Don't you like it?' said his Lordship miserably.

Helen answered, with great and commendable seriousness, 'I do not like it.'

'I'm very sorry,' said his Lordship; 'dooced sorry, by George, I am! I always reckoned on it.'

His disappointment and concern were so genuine that Helen took pity upon him. She held out her hand to him frankly, like a woman of the world.

Men grow up to self-possession in the presence of women slowly, encountering many troubles by the way. Women seem to inherit self-possession by instinct.

'We can be very good friends,' she said, 'as we always have been. Let us be friends.'

'I say, look here, Miss Kenyon,' said Bagleigh, making a last appeal; 'if I'm quiet for a year or two, don't you think there might be a chance?'

'No chance at all,' she answered severely, withdrawing her hand as she spoke. 'If we are to be friends, you must promise me that all this shall be over. If not, you must not speak to me again.'

'I won't do it again,' his Lordship responded, with melancholy aspect.

And so he loved and he rode away.

Gabriel was keen to know the meaning of any sound he heard. He had already despatched the nurse to inquire the name of the arrival when Bagleigh had ridden up to the door and surrendered his horse to

the groom who met him there, and, on Helen's appearance, he asked who it was who had just left; and the girl, anxious for her own part to avoid being questioned, began to tell Bagleigh's news about the intruding Frenchman.

Gabriel shut his eyes at the first mention of him, and, withdrawing his hand from hers, lest she should feel how his own agitated fancies shook him, he listened to the end; and, though he struggled with all his forces to preserve composure, he groaned aloud, and a cold sweat distilled upon his forehead.

'You are in pain, dear,' she cried, alarmed by these signs.

'Yes,' he answered hoarsely, 'I am in pain.'

Her very innocence was suspicious to him. That she should come and tell him this story unconsciously seemed to his wounded and irritated spirit almost an impossibility.

The fact that Peltzer had been in custody explained his absence until now. And now, what would happen —what could happen—but that the man should come back again prepared to denounce him or to bleed him?

There was one matter in respect to which Gabriel had been actually conscientious. He had acted as Helen's steward and almoner; and it was one of his most soothing reflections that the estate which would descend to her was not only in better condition, but larger than it would probably have been if it had

rested under any other man's hand—even the hand of poor cousin Robert, her father.

This, in the careful balance-sheet he kept, made a very considerable set-off to the bill which Providence undeniably had against him. And now, if the estate were to be wasted in ministering to the needs of this scoundrel, the set-off would exist no longer.

The estate, as a direct consequence of his crime, would be impoverished, and might, indeed, if Sullivan's vaticinations were realized, be carried away altogether, and nothing but his own surrender to ignomony and punishment could save it.

And in his own way he had dared to love the child of the man whose life he had taken, and had dared so long to acknowledge the affection to himself that it had ceased to look abnormal or hateful in his eyes.

So he lay and quaked and sweated hour after hour, and day after day, in constant wonder that he was momently spared from ruin. Yet, finding himself still spared, some occasional gusts of courage touched him, and brought freshness to his blood.

If wishes are prayers, Gabriel had rarely prayed for anything more earnestly than he prayed that one glad fancy might prove true, and that M. Peltzer should have died.

The silence and the suspense went on from day to day, but as the silence grew longer the sense of suspense grew feebler, and Gabriel began to gather strength again.

In the meantime Douglas, in spite of the arduous nature of his professional duties in town, had found time to write three or four letters of friendly inquiry as to Gabriel's condition, and Helen, in spite of her duties as nurse, had found time to respond to them. If it were needful to analyse motive closely here, it might be hinted that both Douglas and Helen were guilty of a little hypocrisy.

But Dick persuaded himself as well as he could that his chief object in writing was really to learn how his host and patron was progressing; and Helen, for her part, was quite willing to believe that her chief pleasure in answering these inquiries arose from the fact that she could daily report that Gabriel was stronger.

This exchange of correspondence was not allowed to interfere with Douglas's promised visit, and some ten days after his departure from the Lodge he turned up again to make inquiries in person.

By this time Kenyon was half inclined to think that his ardent wishes had been granted, and that M. Peltzer had gone to his own place.

Spurred by this offspring to his own wishes, which he nurtured with the most constant diligence, he had already begun to move about again, to receive visitors, and to listen to their congratulations on his recovery. The first strangers were an ordeal to him; but since even his own suspicions could find no sign of suspicion in them, the visits of their successors became less and

less trying; and before Douglas arrived Gabriel had grown quit of everything except an occasional nervous tremor.

The young barrister and his inquiries were graciously received, for Gabriel's conscience, in view of recent events, had gone off at a tangent; and whithersoever it might lead him, he was prepared most sedulously to follow it.

He had received a letter from Bagleigh, and knew that the young man's suit was definitely ended; and he had begun to see a new possibility of atonement in blessing the son of the chosen friend of its original proprietor with the possession of the estate he held. His discovery of the papers which had led him to the knowledge of young Douglas's existence might have been a part of the hidden scheme; and after his recent shock, and his apparently miraculous delivery, he could afford nothing but the most instant obedience to the voice of the inward monitor. So he came to the conclusion that if Douglas should really desire Helen, it was his Heaven-sent duty to accept him, poor as he was, as a suitor. Conscience had always had the whip-hand of him in a way, and had driven him where he chose to be driven; but now he cowered before her quite slavishly.

The direction he might take was, of course, contingent on Helen's wishes tending in the same direction; but he began to recall many little things which seemed to chime in with his new fancy.

The only especial effect of Dick's visit was that Kenyon gave him a warm invitation to renew it, and the young fellow went away more than ever impressed with the amiability and gentleness of Gabriel's character.

The days and the weeks went by, and Gabriel's heart was filled with what he supposed to be a devout thankfulness at his escape from a danger from which no escape had seemed possible. He cultivated benevolence until it blossomed out of him in all directions, and he became a prey to every tramp upon the old coaching line from Meldon to London. He became more than ever, if that were possible, a pattern person, and his conscience became more and more tender and susceptible to trifling influences.

He kept himself informed of Douglas's career, and watched Helen closely, when either she or he made allusion to the young barrister. He mentioned him so often, and with so much meaning, that once or twice he trapped the girl into confusion, and his one idea of reparation became more and more confirmed in him.

Dick made one flying visit to the Lodge, spending a restful day or two there, and being received by Gabriel like a father.

It happened, one evening, when the sacred season was growing near, and when, in the twilight, the whole country-side was ghostly with the snow, that Gabriel, who was already coated and muffled for

his before-dinner constitutional, was standing, drawing on his gloves by the library fire, when Helen entered softly, in search of something she had left in the room, and Gabriel laid a fatherly hand upon her head.

'My dear,' he said gently, 'there is one question to which I have never made allusion. I want to speak about it now. You will not be distressed or vexed if I do so?'

'I hope not, dear,' she answered. 'What is it?'

'Three or four months ago,' he said, 'you refused the offer of Lord Bagleigh's hand. What was your reason?'

'I could never marry Lord Bagleigh, dear,' she answered.

'You had no affection for him?' said Gabriel softly. 'Well, well! Is there anybody, dear, whom you could marry, if he asked you?'

His manner was gentle and caressing, and perhaps, though he did not know it, and could not have helped it had he known, a trifle fulsome.

The girl, who of late, more than ever, had done her best to love him, shrank away and made no answer. There was a vibrating line in Gabriel's nature which marred the best music he could make for her.

'Is there anybody, dear?' he asked again. 'Silence gives consent, you know,' he added, finding her silent still. 'I have a letter here,' he went on, after a pause;

'I am asking Mr. Douglas to join us at Christmas-time. Barristers get a fortnight's rest at that period of the year. Shall I ask him to spend the time with us? Shall I send the letter?'

This was surely the plainest speaking, and Helen answered nothing to it.

'Shall I send the letter?' he said again. 'You know why I ask the question.'

He felt benevolent and pious in his purpose.

'I want you to be happy, Helen. Shall I send it?'

The kindness he seemed to show broke down her faint aversion for him, and she kissed him in the twilight.

'Why, that's consent,' said Gabriel, almost gaily. 'It is too dark to see the roses, but they bloom here all the same.' He pinched her cheek as he spoke, and she ran from the room to face her own thoughts in solitude.

Gabriel rang the bell, and bade the servant who responded to add the letter lying on the table to the rest which waited for the post. Then, buttoned and muffled and gloved against the evening air, he walked out, passing solemnly down the village street and across the village churchyard.

He was full of peace at last. The thunderbolt that had fallen in the autumn-time and had well-nigh scared him out of life had passed him harmlessly.

It was meant for a lesson; it had served its turn, and would never fall again.

Thinking thus he paused for a moment, and then, lifting his eyes, discovered, with a shock of superstitious feeling, that he stood opposite Robert Kenyon's monument. He went forward suddenly, and heard the sound of a crunching footstep on the snow behind him.

XX.

On the Monday of the first week in December of that year, Mr. Sullivan, clad in garments of unusual splendour, stood at the door of the house in which he lodged, and gave instructions to two stout fellows within doors about the porterage of a box, which was so large that it was absolutely inconvenient to carry it down the narrow passage and through the doorway.

A four-wheeled cab stood behind him, and the box, with some difficulty, being hoisted to the top of the vehicle, Cyrus drew from his pocket a handful of loose coin, and, with a lordly air, bestowed a sixpence upon the cabman's assistant. He looked about him then with a sprightly air, jerked his hat into half a dozen different postures on his head by as many birdlike movements, pulled at his cuffs and collar, danced a step or two, and was entering at the door of the vehicle, which the cabman held open, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he turned.

All the aspect of prosperity and joy he had

worn faded suddenly. He dashed in the cab with an exclamation, slammed the door, and shouted to the driver:

'Get up and drive!' with every evidence, in face, voice, and manner, of extreme terror.

The person whose unexpected appearance had thus shaken him was no other than Gustave Peltzer.

Monsieur Peltzer had evidently fallen upon dreadful times. His boots were mere gaping sacks of tattered leather; his bosom was bare and blue and cold. Such garments as he wore hung in tattered bannerets about him. He was begrimed and lean and frowsy and malodorous, and altogether more like a beast of prey than ever.

'Drive!' said Sullivan, as this dreadful vision thrust a head through the open window of the four-wheeler.

'Vait!' cried Peltzer. 'You are prosperous,' he said, in rapid French, to Sullivan. 'You have money in your hand. Give me something. I am starving —I am dying.'

Sullivan surrendered half the loose handful of silver, and repeated his beseeching order to the cabman. Peltzer drew back with the coins in his hand.

The cab rolled on, and Sullivan communed with himself.

'It's a hundred to one that's the last of him. If

it only should be, I shall have something to be thankful for. It's a blessing that Maria has made up her mind to go to New York. There, Cyrus, you'll be rid of all the evil companions who, until now, have decoyed you on the downward road to ruin. I suppose that it's rather indecent to get married so soon after having killed Mrs. Sullivan, but if Maria doesn't mind it, it sits easily upon my own conscience.'

Cyrus counted the loose change about him to see of how much he had been frightened by the imperious Peltzer, and, observing that his loss amounted to no more than four-and-ninepence, recovered his spirits, and rode away gaily to be married.

Peltzer, left alone in the street, tore off one of the rags from his fluttering raiment and wrapped his money in it. Then, slipping it into a tattered pocket, and holding it there tightly in his clenched hand, he slouched on smiling.

'I can do it now,' so his thoughts ran. 'I was a fool not to have done it before, when I was there and had the chance. A fool would have done it, an ass would have done it, a pig would have had the brain to think of it! And I permitted myself to be frightened. Silence for silence? Eh, well! But what is any man's silence worth to me, with the dog's life I lead? And what is my silence worth to him in his great house with his servants and his luxuries? You are a

coward, my friend, or you would have played this card before.'

He paused at an ill-conditioned shop, and bought food from which an appetite less ravenous than his own would have recoiled. Then he walked on again, eating as he walked.

He seemed to have made himself familiar with his route, for he asked questions of no man, though he paused to beg here and there from a stranger of respectable aspect, and once or twice succeeded in extorting a copper.

Nightfall saw him fifteen miles from London. He ate and slept at a lodging-house, the lowest and cheapest of its kind; and next day he went on again. The human wolf was weary and cold and hungry; and the wolf courage in him, being once alight, burned fierce and steady.

He shuffled on, doing his fifteen miles a day, or thereabouts, through a day of fog, a day of rain, a day of clear frost, a day of snow—and then the ugly Nemesis, which for thirteen years had strained from the galleys, stood within half a day's march of Perry Haughton.

He had fed abundantly, if coarsely, on the way, and had still a little money left; and in these later hours he began to drink to keep the wolf courage warm.

He slouched on from hamlet to hamlet, the wolf courage failing at times and flaring at times; and in

the early dusk of the winter evening he came to Perry Haughton. He had been apprehensive from the first that his daring might fail him here; and, once arrived, he began to grow so chill upon the enterprise, that he was half disposed to go back again, Even the miserable life he led was better than that he had passed at the galleys; and if there was a prize before him there was a penalty behind it.

He spent his last shilling in brandy, and his courage began once more to flicker and then to flame. He had conceived so violent a hatred against this Kenyon, who kept him out of his own, that, if he could have done it safely, he would have rejoiced to tear him with his hands.

This Kenyon robbed him now, and had robbed him years ago. He would have had a diamond ring, a gold watch and chain, and a roll of crisp bank-notes, as the reward of valour and a dexterous blow, if this man had not stolen his prey from him, and found ten thousand-fold a richer harvest on his body than Peltzer hoped to find.

The wolf courage needed warming, and these reflections and the last shilling's worth of brandy served to warm it so well, that when he skulked to the gates of the Lodge, and, as destiny would have it, saw a well-clad figure emerge from them, he followed with his thievish footstep—*miching mallecho*—as dexterously, and swiftly, and boldly as he could have done

in the heyday of his youth, before years and the galleys tamed his native fires.

Was he sure of his man? The dusk hid much, and thereby helped him. He knew the droop of the shoulders, the hands clasped behind, a something cat-like in the tread of the man he followed. He knew, or thought he knew—but, at the worst, a whispered name would bring the real man to a pause, while it would mean nothing to a stranger. He watched his chance to speak the name, and once or twice, when he thought he had found it, a passing stranger put his plans out of gear, and he had to go on again.

At length, however, the chase led him to the village churchyard. The gate clanged behind Kenyon with a something solitary in its sound, and Peltzer shuffled closer. At the second when Kenyon moved away from the monument which marked his cousin's resting-place he made a swift forward movement.

'Monsieur Moreau!' he whispered, and Gabriel paused in his walk, and turned, stretching out an involuntary hand to catch at the iron railing of a tomb.

'A la fin!' said Peltzer, glancing at him through the dusk with shining eyes.

'What do you want?' asked Kenyon, swaying slightly to and fro, and only sustaining himself by his grasp upon the railing. 'Who are you?'

'I am your old friend and fellow-lodger in the Rue

du Petit Cardinal,' said Peltzer, answering the second question first, in a suppressed rage of hate and fear and triumph. 'I am the man who knows your secret!'

'Hush!' said Gabriel, not knowing that he spoke at all. His terror mastered him, and left him without power of reason. He would have been at the mercy of any braggart scoundrel who had chosen to spring this device upon him.

'I saw you carry in the body,' said Peltzer, in a gloating whisper. 'I saw you give the medicine. I saw the man revive. I heard the talk between you. I saw what happened after. I saw you file the ring from the finger. I saw——'

But here Kenyon's hands went up into the air with a wild gesture which sent the whispering scoundrel back a pace or two.

'I—I—know nothing——' Gabriel quavered.

He writhed both hands as if he grappled with something in the air above him, and suddenly fell forward, as if he dived into some welcome refuge.

Peltzer recoiled, and before he could recover himself the clang of the churchyard gate apprised him of a new arrival. He ran like a hare for swiftness and noiselessness, doubling and crouching among the monuments and tombstones, and then watched and waited. He heard awestruck voices, which he could not comprehend, and rapid footsteps and appeals for

help. Then came lights, and a little crowd of people, who, in a while, departed, with the lights burning clear in the quiet frosty air, and a measured tramp, tramp, tramp, at the core of the crowd. Then silence, and the horror of the night.

THE END.

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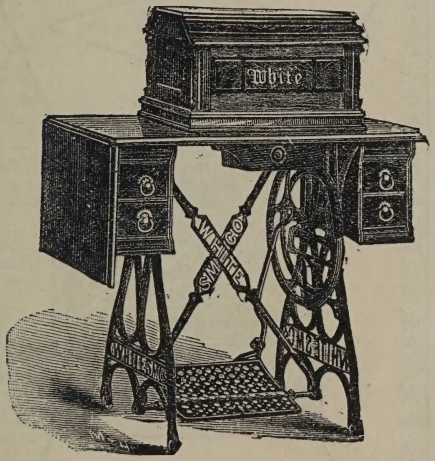

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